

THE TEACHING SCHOLAR

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In his consideration of Santa Clara as a Catholic, Jesuit university in a globalizing world, Mark Ravizza, S.J., observes, “As a *university* our mission must be driven by the pursuit of truth, and directed toward the advancement and diffusion of knowledge through academically excellent research, teaching, and learning.” This paper focuses on those essential to the success of this mission: Santa Clara’s teaching scholars. It poses three questions: 1. How does the model of the teaching scholar express Santa Clara’s characteristic Catholic and Jesuit “way of proceeding”² in enhancing “academically excellent research, teaching, and learning?” 2. What tensions does the model of the teaching scholar encounter? 3. How can a strengthened teaching scholar model serve to enhance the University’s national visibility and reputation?

The Teaching Scholar Model as Santa Clara’s “Characteristic Way of Proceeding”

Santa Clara’s emphasis on the teaching scholar can be traced to the early 1980s when Paul Locatelli, S.J. began promoting this ideal. The University was then at a critical juncture in its transition from a teaching institution to a teaching and research institution. In a 1986 address to the regents Father Locatelli listed three fundamental elements in Santa Clara’s goal of becoming a great university: the primacy of academics in the education of the whole person; coherence between the liberal arts and the professional schools; and “*encouragement of superior performance for faculty in both teaching and research.*” He noted that “all three concern the allocation of resources” and “all three should command our attention.” He acknowledged that the way “*we preserve excellence in teaching and bring research activities up to the same level will require policy decisions regarding teaching loads and funding sources.*”³

Due in part to a reallocation of resources that included a reduction in the teaching load, Santa Clara has been very highly ranked among universities in the West for the last fifteen years in a row. To take the university to the next level, from regional to national prominence, will again require policy decisions regarding teaching loads and funding sources. Scholars at more prominent universities have national and international reputations; they are leaders in their fields; they serve as editors of national journals; their research is respected and their opinions widely sought; they bring their scholarly expertise into the classroom; they invite students to participate in their research; they send well trained students to excellent graduate programs. Only a few of Santa Clara’s faculty have achieved this kind of prominence. The University rightly aspires to substantially broaden this kind of prominence.

Santa Clara’s teaching scholar model is now a well-established distinguishing feature of the university. This model, in its ideal form, provides a unique balance of opportunities and responsibilities for faculty. Teaching scholars do not have the same classroom demands as do faculty at institutions whose focus is primarily teaching. Nor are they faced with the publication expectations characteristic of major research institutions. Instead, empowered by appropriate support from the university, the college and schools, and the departments, they provide excellent teaching, encourage deep learning, and engage in serious and socially conscious scholarship. When this model is successful there is no compromise in the *quality* of teaching and scholarship.

However, the *quantity* of courses taught and publications produced is commensurate with the demands of sustaining excellence in both areas.

How does the teaching scholar model represent a Catholic and Jesuit “way of proceeding”? In its ideal form, the model represents an invitation to connection and integration. Connections occur in the lively conversations and engaging debates within the University’s diverse community of scholars and in the innovative team-taught courses occasionally offered by pairs or groups of faculty. Connections flourish between faculty who reach across departments to collaboratively publish significant research. Connections are manifest in the university’s support for what has been called the “scholarship of integration” in the work of “public intellectuals” who create connections across disciplines to build the broader understandings crucial to our globalizing world. The teaching scholar model, of course, strongly supports the essential “scholarship of discovery” within the disciplines and departments as well, whether this takes shape in publication, performance, or creative production. While the invitation to connection gives the model a characteristic “way of proceeding,” scholarship of all forms is enhanced by the teaching scholar model.⁴

The teaching scholar model supports an integration of teaching and scholarship. Faculty are better scholars because they are teachers. Many would agree that “one never understands a subject thoroughly until one teaches it.” Students raise questions and make comments about subject matter, often expressing new and important perspectives that are valuable for the research of the professors. Faculty are better teachers because they are scholars. In the classroom, they do not present a body of knowledge as outsiders. Having contributed to that body of knowledge they are invested in the material in the ways only insiders can be. Their involvement helps to continually reshape the curriculum, ensuring that students are gaining the benefit of the best and most meaningful new thought across the disciplines. The role of teaching scholar enables faculty to share with students their expertise, passion, and involvement.

Santa Clara University is distinguished and elevated by the teaching scholar’s incorporation of undergraduate as well as graduate students in meaningful research. When faculty have sufficient time to identify aspects of research projects that can be carried out by students and to provide the necessary training, students can help produce scholarship more efficiently and productively. Students benefit as well: student-faculty interaction is associated with high levels of learning and student engagement.⁵ Students become not only consumers of knowledge, but also producers of knowledge. They develop writing skills, information literacy, critical thinking abilities, and a deeper understanding of course content. Students and faculty often develop mentoring relationships that go well beyond any one project or course.

The 2001 Strategic Plan notes the close interrelation of scholarship, teaching, and the university’s mission: “We prize original scholarship for its own sake and for the contribution it makes to teaching and to the betterment of society.”⁶ The teaching scholar model has contributed significantly to the University’s current visibility: it benefits both students and faculty, it serves the university’s mission, and by way of connection and integration it expresses the Jesuit “way of proceeding” through rigorous respect for the intellectual life.

Tensions in the Teaching Scholar Model

In spite of its many benefits, the teaching scholar model embodies a number of tensions. Some critics argue that the faculty role is best envisioned as the dedicated teacher – and not as the scholar. Others argue that faculty energies are most productively devoted to research – and not to the demands of the classroom. But the most significant challenges come from the difficulties of maintaining a balance of teaching and scholarship in a climate of escalating demands and expectations concerning both the quality and quantity of research. For many, research expectations have outstripped the support necessary to meet those expectations. Many feel pressured to produce levels of scholarship more characteristic of their colleagues at research universities. They point out that scholarship at such universities is aggressively fostered through substantial funding, generous leave policies, significantly reduced teaching loads, grading and research assistance from graduate students, fewer advising demands, and reduced expectations that faculty will be available to students.⁷

Santa Clara University is faced with important decisions about how to balance the competing demands of the teaching scholar model if it is to strengthen its reputation as a community of productive scholars, and as an institution where students can expect high quality interaction with faculty. The current emphasis on scholarly excellence alongside our proud tradition of excellence in teaching, advising, and community outreach, will require a significant institutional commitment. The crux of this is time.⁸ For the teaching scholar model embodies another, related tension: university service.

Faculty are not only teachers and scholars, they are also committee members, department chairs, administrators, directors of residential learning communities, organizers of immersion trips, and supporters of community-based learning. Faculty are deeply committed to the good of the university. Yet concerned faculty at all levels of the academic career express frustration with the complex intersections of service, research, and teaching that leave them less and less time for the important work of scholarship. Lecturers who strive mightily to carry out research despite heavy teaching demands rarely receive research support. Tenure track and tenured faculty struggle not only to balance teaching and research, but also to accommodate service obligations. Some assistant professors working to establish courses and begin a meaningful research agenda are faced with heavy departmental service demands. Associate professors often find that service expectations leave precious little time for the research required for promotion, while full professors face even greater service demands. Moreover, the kind of prominence to which Santa Clara aspires requires substantial additional service beyond the university level, including participation and leadership in national scholarly organizations.

Some of Santa Clara's faculty are remarkably successful teaching scholars in spite of the tensions outlined above. The excellent scholarship produced in recent years has been truly astonishing in terms of both quality and quantity. Yet, there is an unseen toll. Those meeting the increased professional demands suffer a decrease in time for personal life. Physical health and family dynamics are suffering as a result. Faculty cannot educate students to be "whole persons" unless they too are "whole." The tensions in the teaching scholar model cannot be ignored.

Strengthening the University Through Strengthening the Teaching Scholar Model

In 1986 Santa Clara University stood at a crossroads. In two decades it has undergone a significant transition. This transition is particularly visible in the role of the faculty. Through the work of its teaching scholars Santa Clara has met the challenge of becoming a more rigorous and distinctive regional university. As Santa Clara seeks greater national recognition as a Catholic and Jesuit university, it must find ways to further support its teaching scholars: it must

address and resolve the tensions in the teaching scholar model, and it must build upon the significant successes of the model. It must be attentive to the changing roles of teaching scholars throughout the phases of the academic career. Junior faculty, for example, will most benefit from an emphasis on teaching and on producing high quality, peer reviewed scholarship of discovery within their fields, with less energy directed to service. Later in their careers, faculty may wish to expand their scholarly focus, writing as “public intellectuals” or publishing integrative scholarship that crosses disciplinary boundaries. Some senior faculty may scale back on teaching in order to serve the university locally and nationally in important administrative or committee roles. Alternately, some senior faculty may scale back temporarily on research in order to focus on service and teaching, only to return to their research once an extensive service obligation is complete. The university must support the faculty throughout these phases of the academic career.

The university must find ways to support its teaching scholars with funding, time, and other appropriate means. Some important strides have already been made: improvements and innovations include the Faculty Development Program, junior faculty development leaves, increased funding for sabbaticals, the Faculty Student Research Assistant Program, flexible course scheduling, and writing groups. A variety of internal grant funds support research and teaching; assistance with external grants is provided by the Office of Sponsored Projects. The Centers of Distinction create collaborative communities, fostering interdisciplinary scholarship. But more is needed to bring us to the next level of achievement. Father Locatelli’s recognition that adding research expectations to the responsibilities of the faculty would require “*policy decisions regarding teaching loads and funding sources*” was bold and prophetic in 1986. In 2005 it provides an excellent starting point for discussions about the future.

Conclusion

Santa Clara University has a community of committed, productive teaching scholars who recognize that “the foundation for a quality Jesuit education striving for national prominence requires the highest quality of teaching, learning, and research and relevance for the contemporary world.”⁹ The teaching scholar model will be a crucial component of Santa Clara’s move toward increasing national prominence if the model can be supported by time and funding that will allow faculty to do their best work. Santa Clara University can set a new standard not only in terms of undergraduate education in a globalizing world and excellence in faculty research, but can also distinguish itself in terms of establishing a Jesuit model of faculty culture that facilitates an integral and integrated life. The university must engage in serious discussion about the proper balance among teaching, scholarship, and service in the lives of “whole persons.” With appropriate support, the teaching scholar model can bring the university increasing visibility as an institution whose “characteristic way of proceeding” includes an invitation to connection and integration that is deeply embedded in a careful attention to student learning, to excellent teaching, and to excellent scholarship.

¹ The University Research Committee, the Ignatian Faculty Forum III, Tom Beaudoin, Paul Crowley, and Robert Senkewicz contributed significantly to this document. Mary Whisner provided copyediting expertise.

² “Conclusion: Characteristics of Our Way of Proceeding,” *Documents of the Thirty-fourth General Congregation*.

³ Locatelli, Paul, S.J., in *Santa Clara Spectrum*, July 1986, 28:7. See also “Faculty at Santa Clara,” Office of the Academic Vice President, May 1986. The phrase “teaching scholar” had been introduced two years earlier to

“sharpen discussion of the pivotal role of faculty in the life of the University” (*Santa Clara University Self-Study Report for Reaffirmation of Accreditation*, Submitted to WASC September 1999, p. 80).

⁴ In *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (1990) Ernest Boyer describes four kinds of scholarship: the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and the scholarship of application. It is the scholarship of discovery and the scholarship of integration that are most clearly recognized in tenure and promotion decisions and that can most profoundly elevate a university’s prominence. Some faculty, having contributed to the scholarship of discovery and integration, may also make important contributions to the “scholarship of teaching,” seeking through their publications to transmit, transform, and extend knowledge about curriculum, pedagogy, and how students learn. Santa Clara is well poised to contribute to the “scholarship of application” as well, by engaging in serious research and publication involving the innovative ways universities can serve their larger communities through their efforts to fashion a more humane and just world.

⁵ National Survey of Student Engagement. 2004.

⁶ Santa Clara University Strategic Plan, 2001.

⁷ Bland, Carole, et al., *The Research-Productive Department: Strategies from Departments that Excel*, 2005.

⁸ In the 1999 WASC report, Santa Clara faculty cited the following as obstacles to teaching and scholarship: “committee work, number of classes to teach, number of students in classes, and department funding.” *Self-Study Report, op. cit. p. 90*).

⁹ Locatelli, Paul, S.J., <Plocatelli@scu.edu> (2005, February 2). Re: Future Directions. [email]. (2005, February 12).