

The Teacher-Scholar at Skagit Valley College
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Introduction

Skagit Valley College is a comprehensive community college serving Skagit, San Juan, and Island Counties. As a comprehensive community college, we offer instructional programs in the areas of transfer, professional-technical and basic skills education. We are a learning institution; therefore, the center of our mission is the teaching/learning process.

The College's mission, vision and core themes provide the framework for the teaching and learning environment. That environment values innovative teaching and learning, student access and achievement, and commitment to serving a diverse community with equity in mind. The Skagit Valley College Teacher-Scholar Model is one strategy to realize the vision and to achieve the mission of the college.

What is the Teacher-Scholar Model?

Teaching Defined

As a community college, we think it is safe to assume that faculty share a broad, common understanding of what it means to be a teacher, even though teaching styles and methods vary widely.

Part of that common understanding is that teaching involves helping students learn a particular subject or set of skills through sharing their expertise. Good teaching, of course, is more than just routinely performing in the role. As described by Parker Palmer, "Good teaching cannot be reduced to techniques; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 10).

In other words, teaching defines who we are and generally involves a commitment and passion for one's discipline, profession, or trade. One way to describe this is to recognize that all faculty are "scholars" who have a deep conviction and commitment to the knowledge, skills and abilities connected to their disciplines or professions. The definition of what it means to be a scholar, however, requires further exploration to describe more fully the Teacher-Scholar Model at Skagit Valley College.

Scholarship Defined

Ernest Boyer, in *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (1990) identified four areas of scholarship: Discovery, Integration, Application, and Pedagogy.

The scholarship of Discovery is probably the most recognizable form of scholarship, yet may be the least practiced in the community college today. It is best understood as *research*, and as Boyer wrote, “It is committed to developing new knowledge, and focuses on the question, “What is to be known, what is yet to be found” (p. 19). Examples of the scholarship of Discovery in the community college include Earth Science students measuring and analyzing carbon emissions on campus, or Culinary faculty researching healthy menu options for low-income youth.

The scholarship of Integration is focused on developing different perspectives on existing knowledge. Boyer described it as “serious, disciplined work that seeks to interpret, draw together, and bring new insight to bear on original research” (p.19). According to Boyer, this scholarship “seeks answers to the questions, ‘What do the findings mean?’ ‘Is it possible to interpret what’s been discovered in ways that provide a larger, more comprehensive understanding?’” (p. 19). The scholarship of Integration in the community college could include activities such as writings based on integrating research studies, curriculum development, art exhibits and performances, and team teaching experiences. Welding faculty, for example, could work together with Sociology faculty and a local woman’s shelter to research, design, and fabricate an appropriate metal piece for installation. The piece might not only reflect the skill in welding, but also the insights from the field of sociology regarding domestic violence.

According to Boyer, the scholarship of Application focuses on the questions, "How can knowledge be applied to consequential problems? How can it be helpful to individuals as well as institutions?"(p. 21). As put by Arthur Dirks (1998), “This scholarship is often thought of as service; however, Boyer argues that service activities must be connected to faculty specialty; must be serious, demanding and accountable; and, must flow out of the expertise in the specialty.”

Perhaps best described as *practical*, the scholarship of Application serves to improve the world in which we live. Examples in the community college include service on boards that shape public policy, select college committee work, and study abroad activities that bring subject expertise to bear on local issues. As another illustration, students in the Early Childhood Education program could engage in a service-learning project with a local Head Start preschool to help provide developmentally appropriate preschool education.

Boyer describes teaching as “a dynamic endeavor involving all the analogies, metaphors, and images that build bridges between the teacher's understanding and the student's learning” (p. 23). The scholarship of Pedagogy focuses on this dynamic endeavor and is aimed at improving the teaching and learning process.

Faculty members engaged in the scholarship of Pedagogy examine both how faculty share knowledge and how students learn or internalize that knowledge. These efforts range from the theoretical (how humans learn) to the practical (how did my students perform on the chapter test?).

Examples of the pedagogy of Scholarship could include forming a faculty learning community to explore teaching strategies aimed at supporting underrepresented students, or perhaps an assessment project undertaken by faculty to evaluate effective models of collaborative learning.

Ideally, the scholarship of Pedagogy leads to improved teaching methods and better learning outcomes for students. At the same time that the craft of teaching can be enriched by an attention to the scholarship of Pedagogy, we also recognize the continual need to develop the content knowledge of the faculty member. This balance was well-stated by the American Council of Learned Societies (2007),

“we view teaching and scholarship as a healthy partnership on behalf of student learning and as mutually sustaining endeavors. The teacher-scholar is at once deeply committed to inquiry in his or her disciplinary field and passionately devoted to successful student learning through teaching and effective institutional practices” (p. 4).

Informed by Boyer, The Skagit Valley College Teacher-Scholar model, identifies “Scholarship” accordingly:

Discovery—Engaging in research that furthers the quest for new knowledge

Integration—Connecting different sources of knowledge together in new ways

Application—Sharing disciplinary expertise with a broader community, often with the aim to address a practical problem or issue

Pedagogy—Investigating or applying new teaching and learning strategies

Why adopt the Teacher-Scholar Model?

Three Features of the SVC Teacher-Scholar

Skagit Valley College has adopted a vision in which “we are committed to quality, innovation, equity, and lifelong learning of students and employees.” A key purpose of the Teacher-Scholar program is to provide an avenue to realize this vision by actively acknowledging, encouraging, and supporting scholarship. Consistent with this vision and purpose, there are three features that inform and guide the SVC Teacher-Scholar model: (1) quality scholarship, (2) equity, and (3) student engagement.

1. Quality Scholarship

Quality scholarship contributes to a healthy and diverse intellectual climate at the college. In this context, it’s worth recalling that, in Boyer’s words, the quality of scholarship is “not just the outcomes, but the process, and especially the passion, [that] give meaning to the effort” (p. 17).

The SVC Teacher-Scholar has adopted the following criteria to define quality scholarship, the first three of which derive from Lee Shulman's, *Teaching as Community Property*:

- Scholarship is public and shared with interested communities.
- Scholarly work invites some form of critical reflection. This could be formal peer review, critique from interested publics, or simply self-reflection.
- The scholarly activity is conducted in such a way to be consistent with commonly accepted ethical standards and recognized norms of responsible conduct; and the activity also reflects awareness of the potential impact of the research on society and particularly populations that have historically been marginalized.

2. Equity in Scholarship

The SVC approach to scholarship, following Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, recognizes that "research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions" (p. 5). With this in mind, it is our aim at SVC to adopt inclusive approaches to scholarship that give consideration to issues of equity and to the voices of traditionally underrepresented groups.

3. Student Engagement in Scholarship

There is a growing body of research that demonstrates the strong link between student success and student engagement (see, e.g., Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini in *How College Affects Students* and by George Kuh, et al, in *Student Success in College*). The more students are connected with faculty, staff and peers—and the more students are actively engaged in the subject matter—the more students are likely to persist, learn, and succeed.

The SVC Teacher-Scholar model draws from the potential to engage students and enhance student learning. Accordingly, a desired (although not required) feature of the SVC Teacher-Scholar model is faculty scholarship that directly involves students and connects them in creative, active ways to course content, disciplinary knowledge and critical thinking. Students involved in original research and scholarship are given meaningful opportunities to interact with faculty and engage material not merely on a surface level, but in a meaningful way that allows for the development of higher-level cognitive and affective skills. "When [students] collaborate with faculty on research, students learn firsthand how experts think about and solve practical problems; their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong learning. The model for such collaboration has long been the teacher-scholar" (American Council of Learned Societies, 2007).

Ultimately, faculty scholarship that engages students in the learning process produces a high-quality, innovative learning environment. Such forms of scholarship provide value

for students, value for faculty, value for the college, and value for the sake of promoting scholarship and knowledge for the broader community.

SVC Teacher-Scholar: The Who and How

Anyone engaged in the teaching and learning process can participate in scholarly activities and projects.

Types of Scholarly Activities

Scholarship at SVC takes many potential forms: The intent is to provide as many arenas as possible in which faculty and staff are encouraged to develop projects that evoke passion and excitement for teaching and learning. Activities related to scholarship include but are not limited to:

- Sabbaticals
- Research Grants
- Summer Stipends
- Seminar Courses
- Release Time
- Travel
- Professional Development
- Conference Presentations
- Curriculum Transformation
- Low-Enrolled Courses
- Pilot Courses
- Scholars-In-Residence
- Community-Based Research
- Study Abroad Projects/Courses
- Integrated Assignments
- Service-Learning Projects
- Assessment Projects

Principles of SVC Teacher Scholar Model

The Teacher-Scholar is guided by the following principles:

- The College's Mission, Vision, and Core Themes provide the framework for developing, implementing and evaluating the Model.
- All four types of scholarship are of equal value.
- Participation is voluntary.
- Scholarly activities are not prescribed; innovation and creativity are encouraged.

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