Statement About My Scholarship

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The following is a statement about my scholarship and research agenda. It is intended to give the reviewer background information important to understanding how the materials enclosed are consistent with my values and beliefs about teaching, research and service. The statement is longer than I intended it to be, but I have tried to include only what is relevant to understanding the work presented. Explanations here are meant to provide a context for the reviewers.

I have never seen myself as anything but a teacher. I mean that in the most positive sense in that I feel my life's work is teaching. When I moved from the high school classroom to secondary administration I did so thinking that I could take a teacher's perspective into a leadership role. When I moved from secondary education to higher education in 1982, I felt it was an opportunity to help aspiring teachers learn more about the satisfaction as well as the frustration that accompanies a life working with young adults. My mission has always been to help others learn that teaching is a highly complex activity when taken seriously. Becoming a great teacher is the work of a lifetime.

Moving to higher education I found the role of professor made work as a teacher more complicated. The professorate carries the dual, and sometimes competing, obligations of teaching and scholarship. I believe incidentally that teaching by its very nature is a form of scholarship, but the scholarship of teaching is not sufficient to satisfy all of the expectations of the professorate. The role of professor brings with it expectations for scholarship. This often gets translated into university tenure and promotion policies to mean publishing research. Research in many universities has become synonymous with
scholarship which raises several questions. What is the relationship between scholarship and research? What counts as research? When should research be published?

[Research should come as a natural outgrowth of one's scholarship and vice versa. Research equates better to the term inquiry than to the term scholarship. Some inquiry results in writing, some writing in publication].

The best way to understand my research and scholarship is to use the framework provided in Scholarship Reconsidered, a text by Ernest Boyer in which he proposes ways to re-conceptualize scholarship in nontraditional terms. He argues that "... scholarship needs to have a broader and more capacious meaning [than research], one that brings legitimacy to the full scope of academic work."

Boyer divides scholarship into four separate but interrelated categories -- the scholarship of discovery; the scholarship of integration; the scholarship of application; and the scholarship of teaching. Discovery comes closest to what is meant when academics speak of "research". This scholarship advances a knowledge base usually in one of the disciplines. Discovery results in new knowledge which advances a field of study. An exclusive expectation for this type of scholarship almost prevented me from becoming a professor. My understanding of traditional research was that professors kept their distance from schools whereas I felt it was more important to be close to the daily goings on of school life. In addition, most of the research I read as a doctoral student was highly quantitative (and also highly disinteresting) using inferential statistics to generate broad generalizations about life in schools. Thankfully, research paradigms have changed to include approaches that make more acceptable the use of qualitative methods.

A second form of scholarship, and one which better describes my professional activities, is the scholarship of Integration. This form of scholarship
makes connections across disciplines; it also means interpreting the research of others into larger intellectual patterns. One example of this scholarship is illustrated in the content area reading and writing textbook I co authored with colleagues at Penn State. Integration is also evidenced in the Problem-based Learning article enclosed in this packet of materials. These two examples illustrate an integrated approach to curriculum. As the boundaries of human knowledge are being dramatically reshaped, schools and universities may find more and more use for the scholarship of Integration.

A third kind of scholarship identified by Boyer is the scholarship of Application. Where Discovery and Integration are investigative and synthesizing traditions of academic life, Application is concerned with how knowledge can be responsibly applied to consequential problems. I believe that school problems themselves provide sufficient agenda for scholarly investigation. The problems of the role of teacher and principal: the problem of curriculum integration; the problem of making supervision more relevant; and the problem of the conceptual abyss between schools and universities are all ones which have occupied my energies and all problems about which I have tried to write. The scholarship of application focuses on how knowledge can be helpful to individuals and institutions. These forms of scholarship not only define my research agenda, but my "service" agenda as well.

These last two forms of scholarship -- integration and application define where I am as a professor. Engaging in scholarship of this nature informs my teaching, ultimately benefiting my students. But it also is my raison d’être. Defining scholarship in this way, Boyer’s reconsideration of scholarship make space in the academy for professionals with my interests and background. I believe that I am a scholar who takes a serious, disciplined approach to
interpreting and drawing together existing research that can bring new insight to practitioners.

Inquiry about schooling is difficult to tie to one discipline because school have cultures that don't easily separate into parts. In recent years, school reform has almost become a "discipline" in and of itself. I am a generalist, and as such I have not devoted my attention to any single discipline. Generalist is relative term I admit, since most professionals can be thought of as generalists given the right context. In history for example, an historian might be considered a generalist compared to a renaissance scholar. Even a renaissance scholar might find herself a generalist in a group of specialists in the history of renaissance art.

My doctoral studies in curriculum and instruction gave me a broad understanding of the contexts and issues of schooling. I have some "specialized knowledge" in curriculum design, supervision of instruction as well as staff and organizational development, but work in educational leadership requires that schools be viewed ecologically rather than by specific disciplines. School reform specifically suffers when attempts are made to do it piecemeal.

The material enclosed was selected to illustrate my scholarship. They include: (1) Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum, a text in which I contributed several chapters including such topics as staff development, organizational change and authentic assessment; (2) Teaching Supervision, a chapter for the Handbook of Research on Supervision in which I argue that supervision should be re conceptualized as a "service discipline"; (3) Problem-based Learning, an article currently under review by the Journal of Curriculum and Supervision which suggests using an integrated approach to leadership preparation; (4) Opportunities for Leadership, an article published in the Ohio ASCD Journal which embeds leadership within school/university partnerships; and (5) Equilibrium and Struggle, an article currently under review by the
International Journal of School Reform which describes my role as university liaison. [What about the Danforth Report or CSD??]

These pieces of writing were selected to illustrate the scholarship using the scholarship of integration and application as a framework for understanding. They are representative samples of my writing and suggest where I will direct my inquiry in the future. My continuing interest in school renewal will lead to more inquiry around the roles of teachers, principals and school leadership. Transforming roles implies changing the relationships among all individuals who work in school renewal. When roles and relationships shift, organizations and communities also transform. I hope to conduct inquiry which will be instructive to that process. Such inquiry will inform not only my scholarship but also my teaching.