

The Teacher Scholar Philosophy of SIUE: Comments and Responses

Below are comments concerning the Teacher Scholar Philosophy of SIUE. A majority of the comments were received at the 28 November 2007 faculty discussion. Comments from various departmental meetings have also been included. Following the comments are responses from the Task Force. In some instances, the Task Force agreed with the comment and will make appropriate changes. In other cases, the Task Force disagreed with the comment and gives a rationale.

Comment:

The document says it is to clarify expectations. Doesn't that make this statement prescriptive, i.e. isn't it imposing standards upon departments and abrogating departmental autonomy?

Response:

This statement is not intended to be prescriptive to departments. It is intended to clarify expectations across departments that all tenure/tenure-track faculty members are expected to be engaged in research, teaching, and service. This document is intended to bring some consistency to our goals for the University and its faculty. Clarifying expectations is not the same as imposing standards. Nevertheless, the document will be revised to clarify that it is a statement of aspirations not benchmarks.

Comment:

This document sounds like it has policy implications. Is this a new set of expectations for Promotion and Tenure?

Response:

It is not the purpose of the document to change expectations for Promotion and Tenure. It should help clarify expectations for Promotion, Tenure, and merit.

Comment:

Will this be a binding document?

Response:

This document is intended to help articulate what we as an academic community believe. It is not an attempt to change policy.

Comment:

The document says it is trying to clarify language. It doesn't. It makes the language more confusing by using "scholarship" and research interchangeably and synonymously. It further confounds clarity by using "scholarly" as an adjective for teaching and service. Wouldn't it be simpler to use research, teaching, and service? The language is too imprecise.

Response:

The document attempted to clarify our use of terms such as "scholarship of teaching" and "scholarship of service." The language used in this document is based upon the secondary literature. Nevertheless, we will modify the terms.

Comment:

The document assumes that faculty members get to teach courses in their field of research. In fact, faculty members rarely get courses in the research area.

Response:

This comment is true. Faculty members rarely teach courses directly related to their research. Nevertheless, engagement in research has benefits for the faculty in the classroom. Engagement in research is the process by which faculty members renew their knowledge. It makes them good learners, a critical factor in making good teachers. Engagement in research keeps the faculty member aware of the literature and the nuances of the field. Research keeps the faculty member current.

Comment:

This statement says that teachers need to know the literature on pedagogy in their discipline. This requirement is unrealistic.

Response:

Agreed. It is unrealistic for faculty members to know all the pedagogical literature in their discipline. The document will be modified. Nevertheless, good teachers need to be aware of effective teaching practices for their discipline.

Comment:

By saying “balance,” does this mean the load requirements for faculty will be 33% each for research, teaching, and service? Does “balance” work when for promotion and tenure, faculty must be rated at least “meritorious in Teaching? How does this affect the 3:1:1 time and effort expectation?

Response:

“Balance” does not mean equal balance in 33% increments. Depending where one puts the fulcrum, balance is achieved even though one activity may have more weight. This document is not meant to imply effort must be evenly distributed or that faculty must now be “meritorious” in all categories. We will clarify the meaning of “balance” in the document.

Comment:

Why are we doing this document if not to effect promotion and tenure policies?

Response:

The purpose of this document is clarify our understanding of what we aspire to be. It attempts to find agreement on what we value. This articulation will mitigate confusion over expectations and standards. This articulation will help build a sense of community by identifying our common purposes.

Comment:

The statement that faculty are to teach the “current and best” knowledge seems subjective.

Response:

We feel strongly that faculty should be teaching current knowledge. The term “best” will be dropped since its connotations are misleading.

Comment:

Does the definition of research, i.e. “advances a research question” and “applies a methodology” rule out theoretical work?

Response:

The statement defining research is not intended to rule out theoretical research. We will revise the language to clarify.

Comment:

This feels like a “gotcha” document, i.e. the document is setting standards that will later be used to evaluate faculty. It looks like it is an administrative attempt to increase work expectations without providing additional resources. The document looks like it sets benchmarks.

Response:

The purpose of the document is to articulate what we say we believe in regard to the teacher scholar. In the process, it is attempting to find agreement on language and values. Departments would be responsible for operationalizing this philosophy within the framework of the document.

Comment:

The document is too broad and will allow for capricious decision-making.

Response:

We agree that the statement is broad. Statements of philosophy need to be sufficiently broad to include the variations among academic disciplines. This document is to be a guide for faculty in making policy. Policy and procedures guide decision-making.

Comment:

The document is too restrictive and enforces an unnecessary and undesirable standardization.

Response:

We disagree. We strongly believe that it is desirable to articulate a set of values for the academic community.

Comment:

Boyer’s model is not the only model and is not always the best fit.

Response:

Agreed, Boyer is not the only model, but it fits SIUE well. Additionally, the Boyer model is what is recognized in higher education.

Comment:

What does “generalizable” mean? This term is a problem for qualitative research.

Response:

Use of the term “generalizable” comes from a federal definition of research. It is not meant to exclude any kind of research. It is meant to distinguish between activity that has value and meaning outside a particular instance and work that is antiquarian and has little meaning beyond local circumstances. The document will be modified to clarify this point.

Comment:

Does everything have to be peer reviewed? What constitutes peer review? For example, all paper presentations aren't peer reviewed. Publication of book chapters and even books isn't necessarily peer reviewed.

Response:

This is a good point. Certainly grants/contracts, papers at professional conferences, and other forms of disseminating research are valued. The document will be modified to recognize explicitly these activities. Nevertheless, at some point, research must be peer reviewed whether it be comments at a conference or a review of the book. The purpose of stating that research must be peer reviewed is to provide validation that the research is of value to the discipline.

Comment:

What is SIUE going to do to support the faculty achieve this model?

Response:

SIUE provides a good deal of support for this model. The programs supporting research in the Graduate School, the programs supporting teaching in the Provost Office, and the programs supporting excellence in graduate and undergraduate education all support this model.

Comment:

Why "teacher scholar" instead of "scholar teacher" or "teaching scholar?"

Response:

The commonly used phrase in the literature is "teacher scholar."

Comment:

Is the involvement of students in research an expectation? This is more easily accomplished in some disciplines and not in others.

Response:

Conducting research is a powerful tool for learning. Engagement of students in research projects, whether a faculty member's personal research or some other project is the ideal.

Comment:

How does this apply to Non-Tenure Track faculty?

Response:

This statement of philosophy does not set expectations for non-tenure track faculty.

Comment:

We are already doing this. Why do we need this statement?

Response:

Some departments are indeed fulfilling this statement of philosophy. Other departments are not. Regardless, there is a lack of clarity of what the "teacher scholar" means.

Comment:

There is too much emphasis on scholarship/research.

Response:

We disagree.

Comment:

Are there common enough interests among the disciplines to make this feasible?

Response:

We believe that a statement of philosophy and values should and must encompass the entire campus.

Comment:

What happens if the Faculty Senate approves this? What happens next?

Response:

We hope that departments and schools/college will consider how to operationalize this statement of philosophy and value.

Comment:

How will grants be classified? Not all grants are peer reviewed.

Response:

Currently, external grants are recognized in University Policy as a form of scholarship. This will not change.

Comment:

What about EUE grants? Are they considered part of scholarship?

Response:

An EUE or an EGE grant may be considered scholarship if it meets the criteria of "scholarship." Not all of those grants meet those criteria.

Comment:

Does this document define our work? If this applies to all, how will each department relate to it? Is it really possible to define a uniform set of expectations without being so vague as to be meaningless on the one hand, or prescriptive on the other? More guidance is needed on how to measure these values.

Response:

This document defines our values and our aspirations. It applies to all departments. Faculty actions resulting from this document will make it operational.

Comment:

The document is very conceptual. More guidance is needed on how to implement.

Response:

This is a statement of philosophy and values. It is not a policy. It will be the responsibility of each department to determine how to implement this philosophy.

Comment:

Scholarship is too broadly defined.

Response:

We disagree. Boyer's broader definition of research is accepted throughout most of higher education.

Comment:

Is there really such a thing as "Scholarship of Service?" The distinction between Scholarship of Service and Scholarly Service is unclear.

Response:

We will revise this section to clarify the meaning.

Comment:

More weight needs to be given to service.

Response:

We disagree. The statement does not attempt to assign any weight to the functions of the faculty. We believe that it would be inappropriate and prescriptive to do so.

Comment:

Is there a difference between what should be expected from different disciplines?

Response:

We believe that there are significant differences among disciplines. Nevertheless, the disciplines should be united in believing in a common set of values and principles. This statement attempts to provide a beginning point.

Comment:

Are the faculty expected to meet all the elements that are enumerated in the bullets?

Response:

This is a statement of philosophy and values. It is not a "checklist" of what all faculty must do. Its what we aspire to do.

Comment:

Does this document raise standards?

Response:

This document is a statement of philosophy and values. Departments may operationalize it in whatever manner is appropriate of the discipline.

Comment:

The statement on research needs to be more inclusive.

Response:

We believe the definition of research is inclusive. We will, however, clarify the statement to insure that all forms of discipline specific research is recognized.

Comment:

What is the benefit to students?

Response:

A strong faculty of teacher scholars makes for excellence in education.

