

## LETTERS

### Continuing the Discussion on Scholarship in Pharmacy Education

*To the Editor.* We appreciated the Statement on pharmacist scholarship by James Kehrer and Craig Svensson, and would like to contribute to the conversation on this important topic with an emphasis on scholarship in pharmacy education. In particular, we would like to provide some broader history of the development of the field of scholarship of teaching and to describe some efforts in advancing scholarly practices in this area at the University of British Columbia.

With regard to the nature of scholarship, Boyer is correctly credited for his expansive vision and, especially, for coining the term “scholarship of teaching” in his 1990 monograph *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. The impetus for this work was a growing concern about the quality of undergraduate education in the United States as institutions increasingly focused on graduate education and research, particularly in the well-established scientific disciplines. However, it must be said that while Boyer certainly saw teaching as serious intellectual work that should be valued by institutions, he did not provide a definition or even a clear description of the scholarship of teaching.<sup>1</sup>

Boyer did not live to see the publication of the companion volume, *Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate*, which outlined 6 standards for all forms of scholarship:

- (1) Clear goals, allowing others to understand the purpose of the work and judge whether the goals are achievable.
- (2) Adequate preparation, which includes awareness of existing scholarship and having the necessary skills and resources to undertake the work.
- (3) Appropriate methods, which are congruent with the goals and are applied effectively.
- (4) Significant results, which achieve the intended goals, contribute to the field, and suggest avenues for further investigation.
- (5) Effective presentation, which includes appropriate style, organization, and venue.
- (6) Reflection, including self-evaluation based on evidence and application to future work.<sup>2</sup>

With respect to the scholarship of teaching, the authors suggested that these criteria are manifested through providing clear learning objectives; being well-prepared for class; using appropriate pedagogies and assessment

procedures; stimulating students’ interests and engendering learning that students value; explaining course material effectively to students and sharing teaching innovations with colleagues; and modifying teaching approaches in response to critique and undertaking professional development activities.<sup>2</sup> While these are excellent teaching practices indicative of scholarly teaching, they are not the scholarship of teaching as we know it today.

Many have contributed to the advancement of the field by distinguishing between scholarly teaching and scholarship of teaching, and Lee Shulman has been particularly influential in shifting the focus of scholarship from the practice of teachers to the learning achieved by students.<sup>3,5</sup> Huber and Hutchings, significant scholars in the area, broaden the view by describing the scholarship of teaching as “a big tent. . . under which a wide range of work can thrive.”<sup>6</sup> They suggest that:

The scholarship of teaching and learning may involve modest efforts that faculty can fit into their academic lives with relative ease—for example, documenting and reflecting on teaching and learning in a single course. It may involve small-scale classroom inquiry. Or it may be part of a larger initiative, involving more formal research and evaluation designs, and perhaps collaboration with colleagues in other settings.<sup>6(p71)</sup>

Richlin, on the other hand, takes a harder line, suggesting that the scholarship of teaching requires peer review and dissemination of the outcomes of scholarly teaching, and that excellence should be judged in the same way as other forms of scholarship, ie, by applying the standards used by granting agencies, journals, and conferences.<sup>4</sup>

Debate over the definition of the scholarship of teaching continues. Concerns linger that the “big tent” view is too inclusive to be helpful in guiding and evaluating faculty work, while the “hard line” view is too exclusive and not achievable for many faculty members.<sup>7,8</sup> The dilemma here is similar to that articulated by Kehrer and Svensson regarding pharmacist researchers. Most faculty members come to the scholarship of teaching (and, in fact, to teaching itself) with little or no relevant experience or training in educational research because their own education emphasized expertise in their disciplinary content and methods.<sup>9</sup> For the scholarship of teaching (and in fact, all teaching) to be taken seriously, it must have credibility within the disciplines and the institutions in which it takes place. Increasingly it must also have credibility as educational research, where the standards for excellence may be quite different.<sup>8,10</sup> Although rarely mentioned, an exacerbating yet critically important issue in pharmacy schools is that

pharmacy education has not typically been recognized as a legitimate scholarly discipline among the long-standing research disciplines such as the basic pharmaceutical sciences and, increasingly, clinical pharmacy and pharmacy practice. As articulated by Kehrer and Svensson for pharmacist researchers, it may take 4 decades to establish pharmacy education as a legitimate scholarly discipline within pharmacy schools.

In the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of British Columbia, we have a long history of engagement in the scholarship of teaching. Four faculty members, including the 2 of us, graduated in 1999 as part of the first cohort of the university's Faculty Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Leadership Program: Faculty Certificate on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, and 14 more have completed the program since. The 2 of us, both tenured Senior Instructors, have gone on to be instructors in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning program and are now pursuing PhD studies in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy. We are gaining experience in conducting educational research, and are beginning to provide mentorship to our instructor colleagues, as Kehrer and Svensson recommend for pharmacist researchers. We have assisted others with developing research protocols, obtaining ethics approval, analyzing findings, and disseminating results. We have also helped establish a 26-member pedagogical research group in our Faculty, modeled after our pharmaceutical sciences research streams (eg, Molecular & Cellular Pharmacology and Nanomedicines & Drug Delivery). Although in its infancy, our Office of Educational Support and Development intends to foster educational scholarship within the Faculty. Many of the approaches suggested by Kehrer and Svensson regarding pharmacist researchers make sense for the development of educational scholars and scholarship within our Faculty.

Institutional support is critical to such initiatives, and we have been lucky to find it both within the Faculty and at the University. An example of the former is the financial support our pedagogical research group has received through an innovation fund administered by our Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and Research. Examples of the latter are the University of British Columbia's Teaching

and Learning Enhancement Fund, which provides valuable funding on a competitive basis to support educational development, as well as the creation of a new rank, Professor of Teaching, to which instructors may now aspire. Criteria for promotion to this rank include outstanding performance in educational leadership, teaching, and learning; curriculum development and pedagogical innovation; and academic service.<sup>11</sup> We believe that academic pharmacy needs to take seriously the importance of scholarly education in pharmacy and the need for the development of pharmacy education scholars.

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