

## Service First

*Embracing the Scholarship on Teaching and Learning through Active Engagement  
in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Education*

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### Abstract

In this article, we turn the tripartite responsibility of teaching, scholarship, and service inside out. Rather than considering service to be a poor stepchild to scholarship and teaching, we reason that service as engaged scholarship should be the centerpiece of academic life, especially in an applied discipline like parks, recreation, and tourism. We reason further that improving engaged service should be the driving force behind good teaching, student learning, and scholarship. Finally, we reason that “impact factor,” a term commonly limited to citations in scholarly journals, should be expanded to include positive differences made on the ground in professional practice as well as scholarly presentations and publications that display the value of the scholarship of engagement and the scholarship on teaching and learning.

**Keywords:** *impact factor; relevance; scholarship of engagement; scholarship on teaching and learning; service*

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The perceived importance of teaching, scholarship, and service in academic life has varied greatly throughout our nation's history. Boyer (1990) discussed this variation in the context of three distinct phases through which higher education has passed: the colonial college, which focused on building students' intellectual and moral development for civic and religious leadership; the land-grant college, which focused on applied learning to shape and build a nation; and more recently, the research university, which focuses on the advancement of knowledge through science. In the colonial college, teaching was paramount. With the rise of land-grant colleges and universities, service prevailed. Now, in the modern university, basic research and the never ending quest for extramural funding predominate.

Concomitant with these changes in the way teaching, scholarship, and service have been viewed over time, Boyer (1990) described a widening rift between the democratization of higher education and faculty reward structures; that is, a growing need and mounting pressure to make higher education increasingly accessible to a wider cross-section of America's citizenry while simultaneously narrowing the standards employed to measure and reward professors' contributions to the academic enterprise. Essentially, Boyer criticized the emphasis on basic research as the primary measure of a professor's worth at the expense of teaching and service, which he believed were equally important to meet the needs of growing and increasingly diverse numbers of students striving to better their station in life.

Boyer's remedy was to redefine scholarship to include elements of teaching and service as well as basic research. He proposed four kinds of scholarship: discovery, integration, application (since referred to as *engagement* [Rice, 2005]), and teaching (since referred to as *teaching and learning* [Rice, 2005]). The scholarship of discovery "comes the closest to what academics mean when they speak of research" (Boyer, 1990, p. 17). The scholarship of integration makes "connections within and between the disciplines, placing the specialties in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way, often educating nonspecialists, too...[it is] serious disciplined work that seeks to interpret, draw together, and bring new insight to bear on original research" (pp. 18–19). It also means "interpretation, fitting one's own research—or the research of others—into larger intellectual patterns" (p. 19). The scholarship of engagement "moves toward engagement as the scholar asks, 'How can knowledge be reasonably applied to consequential problems?'"(p. 21). Finally, scholarship on teaching and learning is defined by several guiding principles, including active learning, critical thinking, and lifelong learning.

Richlin and Cox (2004) have further distinguished between scholarly teaching and the scholarship on teaching and learning:

The purpose of scholarly teaching is to affect the activity of teaching and the resulting learning, while the scholarship of teaching results in a formal, peer-reviewed communication in appropriate media or venues, which then becomes part of the knowledge base of teaching and learning in higher education (pp. 127–128).

These evolving conceptions of scholarship have helped shape the discourse over the last two decades. Specific to parks, recreation and tourism education, an ad hoc committee reporting to the president of the Society of Park and Recreation Educators delivered a report detailing ways the scholarship on teaching and learning could be promoted within

park and recreation education (Stevens, Rosegard, Evans, Ralston, Rodgers, & Ross, 2009). This committee also used the phrase “scholarship on teaching and learning” instead of “scholarship of teaching and learning” to clarify that the scholarship is about the topic of teaching and learning. Finally, this same committee further explained how excellent teaching differs from the scholarship on teaching and learning. The latter involves the scholarly investigation of student learning outcomes that becomes scholarship when shared with peers for evaluation and critique.

Boyer’s proposed solution is appealing for at least four reasons: first, by expanding the concept of scholarship to include teaching and service, the professoriate’s tripartite responsibility can be interpreted as one mutually reinforcing set of activities rather than three separate and oftentimes competing activities; second, a more inclusive definition of scholarship encourages a broader standard against which to measure a professor’s contributions to higher education; third, an expanded view of scholarship allows service (i.e., engagement) to gain equal footing with teaching (i.e., student learning) and research (i.e., scientific research) as a critical expression of academic worth; and fourth, an expanded view of scholarship gives academicians more incentive to demonstrate the relevance of what they do to help solve society’s vexing problems because it facilitates alignment between professors’ diverse roles and responsibilities in service, teaching and research and the reward systems on which tenure, promotion, and salaries are based.

The purpose of our article is to illustrate how the scholarship of engagement and the scholarship on teaching and learning can be seen as collaborations between academicians and community partners that engage students to enhance their learning and should also result in products to be shared with the academic community. The two scholarships can and should be viewed as complementary and integral to the work of the professoriate, especially in an applied discipline like parks, recreation, and tourism. Employing the logic of Boyer’s *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990), O’Meara and Rice’s *Faculty Priorities Reconsidered* (2005), and Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone’s *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Reconsidered* (2011) to help frame the discussion, we make the case that engaged service, often stigmatized as the ‘black hole’ in the tripartite, ought to be taken more seriously when measuring the impact of a professor’s work. We then illustrate our point of view with examples from the University of Utah. Finally, we conclude the article by proposing that the impact of the scholarship of discovery, integration, engagement, and teaching and learning be measured not only by citation counts in scholarly journals but also by the extent to which it improves student learning and enhances professional practice.

### **The Scholarship of Engagement**

Because the scholarship of engagement is often misunderstood, it is important at the outset to make Boyer and his successors’ conception explicit. They distinguish between two kinds of service: 1) a form of citizenship (e.g., serving on departmental, college, and university committees; academic advising; serving on boards and committees beyond the university in community and professional settings); and 2) service emanating directly from a professor’s specialized academic knowledge. It is this latter kind of service that constitutes the scholarship of engagement. It is a kind of scholarship that demonstrates the applicability of a professor’s learning to the resolution of pressing social and environmental problems. It is also a kind of scholarship that is informed by practitioners in the discipline. It is the kind of scholarship that is ripe with opportunities to enhance student learning when students

partner with their professors to learn through engagement while addressing timely, relevant issues. The scholarship of engagement reflects both the tradition of the land-grant colleges (e.g., extension offices) and the late nineteenth and early twentieth century principle that “higher education must serve the interests of the larger community” (Boyer, p. 22).

Boyer even suggested that service to the community was considered to be a defining characteristic of the American scholar earlier in our nation’s history. He referenced an editorial by Abbott (1906) celebrating the University of Chicago’s new president, William Raney Harper, and a view of American scholarship as “equipment for service” in contrast to the British view of scholarship as “a means and measure of self development” and the German view of scholarship as “an end in itself” (p. 110–111). Boyer then pointed out the irony in thinking of the American scholar as someone who is dedicated to serving the community through learning while the university itself, through its reward structure, discourages professors from engaging in service activities. He echoed Jencks and Riesman’s (1968) observation that even once free-standing professional schools, now affiliated with universities, have separated themselves from applied work though their original charge was to connect theory to practice.

Boyer concluded his treatise on the importance of the scholarship of engagement by recounting Handlin’s (1986) observation that our troubled planet can no longer “afford the luxury of pursuits confined to an ivory tower. . . . [S]cholarship has to prove its worth not on its own terms but by service to the nation and the world” (p. 23).

### **Scholarship and Community**

There is additional irony in the way modern universities, especially research universities, think of themselves. In an effort to elevate their status, they broadcast their national and international reputations. The message they send professors, wittingly or not, is that national and international impacts matter more than local and regional impacts (e.g., a national or international reputation is a common criterion for promotion to the rank of professor). Making a difference close to home is implicitly devalued, and professors tend to shy away from local and regional-focused teaching, scholarship, and service accordingly. Moreover, applied research (the scholarship of engagement), and involving students in engaged service-learning, tends to be lightly regarded (and sometimes outright discouraged) in mentoring, retention, promotion, and tenure decisions, while basic research (the scholarship of discovery) is prized. Meanwhile, citizen support for higher education erodes as taxpayers fail to see how their publicly supported universities make much of a difference in their everyday lives.

We believe it is incumbent on academic departments in general, and parks, recreation, and tourism departments in particular, to demonstrate relevance on the home front to both the community and university. Engaged scholarship involving service-learning is also highly appealing to students preparing for this profession because they are deeply committed to making a positive difference. This is especially important for an academic discipline that is frequently misunderstood and underappreciated. As Henderson (2010) noted, in the absence of a clear sense of how parks, recreation, and tourism improve quality of life, it should come as no surprise when this area of human inquiry is sometimes marginalized in higher education. The challenge is clear. Parks, recreation, and tourism scholars must demonstrate their academic worth by applying their expertise to the resolution of problems on campus and in the surrounding community through the scholarship of engagement.

And if the scholarship of engagement includes service-learning, so much the better, because professors can simultaneously provide skilled assistance to local communities while greatly enhancing student learning. In addition, to demonstrate relevance to their university, professors should also consider including a scholarly component to engaged projects. This simply means developing some type of product from their efforts that can contribute to teaching and learning. This could include sharing—in a peer-reviewed format—successful teaching strategies, learning activities, assessment methods, or reporting on data collected during an engaged project.

### **University of Utah Example**

The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism (PRT) at the University of Utah is a case in point. The Department is housed in a College of Health (COH), which in turn is housed in a larger Health Sciences complex. The COH consists of seven departments and divisions, including Communication Sciences and Disorders, Exercise and Sport Science, Health Promotion and Education, Nutrition, Occupational Therapy, PRT, and Physical Therapy. The COH is one of four colleges and schools in Health Sciences, including the Colleges of Nursing and Pharmacy and the School of Medicine.

On the face of it, PRT is the least likely fit in what is largely a clinically oriented and medical model-based Health Sciences. The University of Utah prides itself in the quality of its academic programs in health care, and Health Sciences faculty members are highly successful in garnering millions of dollars annually in National Institutes of Health (NIH) or similar federal level grants to support their work. Health Sciences is also home to a recent Nobel Prize winner in Physiology/Medicine, scores of professors who turn medically-related patents into new university-sponsored businesses, and other entrepreneurial endeavors designed to generate revenue to subsidize a public university that receives only a fraction of its operating budget from state taxes.

PRT's challenge is to demonstrate its relevance to health care, especially to the reduction of social health care costs, through the preventative, developmental, and rehabilitative power of parks, recreation, and tourism. To be sure, PRT is committed to demonstrating its relevance through the scholarship of discovery, integration, and teaching and learning, but we believe the scholarship of engagement offers the best opportunity to demonstrate to the larger university as well as Utah's citizenry that PRT has an important role to play in improving health and wellness close to home.

PRT's strategy is two-fold. First, faculty members are working to expand the concept of health in Health Sciences beyond the medical model to include environmental as well as human health. They are promoting the idea of ecological health as the best expression of what it means for people to be in a positive symbiotic relationship with the world around them (Dustin, Bricker, & Schwab, 2010). They are trying to "green" the concept of health. Second, PRT's faculty is demonstrating the relevance of its work through the scholarship of engagement carried out across campus and in the adjoining Salt Lake City metropolitan area.

The main vehicle propelling PRT's scholarship of engagement forward is its University Experiential Learning and Outdoor Recreation Education (U-EXPLORE) program, which historically has been a service arm to the primary academic mission of educating future parks, recreation, and tourism professionals and professors through its undergraduate and graduate programs. U-EXPLORE currently consists of approximately 60 outdoor

recreation skill development courses that serve several hundred University of Utah students each semester as well as the general public. The courses have classroom and experiential education components and are popular with students throughout the university. The Department employs scores of part-time U-EXPLORE instructors, and two full-time faculty members oversee the operation.

The U-EXPLORE program has been highly successful in an ancillary way, but now much more is being asked of it. The program is moving from the periphery of what is done in PRT to its center. It is being turned into a showcase for the scholarship of engagement and the scholarship on teaching and learning. It is not only services that are being offered through U-EXPLORE; the faculty is intentionally designing, implementing, and evaluating U-EXPLORE's offerings to improve professional practice. In the process, the fruits of the faculty's labor are more visible to the larger university and the surrounding community.

Here, briefly, are several initiatives in various stages of development that illustrate PRT's progress to date. Note that each initiative is the result of collaboration between PRT faculty and a variety of partners, including both community members and students, and capitalizes on the faculty's specialized academic knowledge in parks, recreation, and tourism in addressing a consequential social or environmental issue. Note as well that although these initiatives are still in the early stages of development, anecdotal reports from students and practitioners alike suggest that a 'learning by doing' approach facilitates active learning, critical thinking, and lifelong learning, qualities reflecting the guiding principles of the scholarship on teaching and learning (Richlin & Cox, 2004).

### **Veterans Orientation Initiative**

The University of Utah counts approximately 1,000 veterans among its student body. Transitioning to civilian life has been difficult for many veterans and drop-out rates are high. In an effort to assist veterans returning to civilian and university life, PRT is working with the Veterans Support Center on campus and veterans themselves to develop a semester-long course that begins with a multiday outdoor recreation experience and focuses on teamwork, community-building, and recreation skill development. The field experience will be followed by advising sessions throughout the first semester to help veterans work through issues that commonly impede their transition to academic life (e.g., scheduling conflicts, G.I. Bill bureaucracy, communication problems with students and faculty who cannot relate to military experience, family and marital difficulties, etc.). The Department is also in the early stages of serving veterans coping with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder through U-EXPLORE's programs (Dustin, Bricker, Arave, Wall, & Wendt, 2011). PRT is an ideal department to spearhead this effort. Faculty members have the outdoor recreation skill development expertise, programming, leadership, and counseling expertise, and the student, faculty, and staff resources to help facilitate this campus-wide initiative.

Taking this interest in veterans' issues to the scholarly level, PRT will co-host "This Land Is Your Land: Toward a Better Understanding of Nature's Resiliency-Building and Restorative Power for Armed Forces Personnel, Veterans, and their Families" in September of 2014. The three-day symposium will bring together researchers, practitioners, and veterans to discuss programs, evaluation methods, and research results, as well as current needs and challenges for returning service members. The symposium proceedings will then be crafted into an edited book. Co-hosting this symposium and producing a scholarly work is another way for PRT to demonstrate its commitment to transforming community-engaged initiatives into scholarly products.

### **International Students Initiative**

The University of Utah hosts a large international student population. These students come to Utah primarily for an academic and cross-cultural experience. Many of them, however, never see Utah's unique landscape or the surrounding intermountain region. In cooperation with the International Student Center, U-EXPLORE courses now introduce international students to the United States' western national parks. The goal is to have these students leave Utah with a richer overall education than they would have had if they never ventured beyond the Salt Lake City campus. U-EXPLORE's leadership has already developed two courses, including a successful Yellowstone course, and produced a video documenting the quality of that learning experience (see PRTL 1266 Yellowstone video, 2012). The course is now featured along with several other U-EXPLORE offerings on the main page of the University's website. Once again, PRT is taking advantage of faculty's academic expertise in travel and tourism, outdoor education, and environmental education to demonstrate its relevance to improving the quality of the educational experience for all students attending the University of Utah.

### **Students with Disabilities Initiative**

Like most universities, the University of Utah has a large population of students with disabilities. To date, however, PRT has not done a good job of serving those students through the U-EXPLORE program. Benefiting from the faculty's expertise in therapeutic recreation, adventure and outdoor programming, outdoor leadership, and outdoor recreation skill development, new U-EXPLORE courses are in development to accommodate students with disabilities. In collaboration with the University's Center for Disability Services, and modeled after the Wilderness Inquiry II program (Wilderness Inquiry II, 2013) based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, these courses will include able-bodied participants and participants with disabilities who will draw on one another's strengths while living and learning together in the outdoors. A significant part of this initiative will be the scholarship of engagement through the intentional design, implementation, and evaluation of U-EXPLORE's course offerings.

### **School Partnership Initiative**

Grounded in Louv's *Last Child in the Woods* (2005), a book about the increasing distance between children and nature, PRT is committed to introducing Utah's urban children to the out-of-doors early in life. PRT has adopted an inner-city elementary school and is providing 5th graders with opportunities to connect with nature through a "Walk the Wasatch" program that weaves science-based learning objectives into outdoor recreation experiences (see Edison Elementary School video, 2012). This collaboration between public school teachers and PRT faculty members and students capitalizes on faculty and student expertise in youth development, outdoor education, environmental education, adventure and outdoor programming, and outdoor recreation skill development. Making a positive difference in the lives of Salt Lake City's children through this U-EXPLORE program is a particularly important way for PRT to demonstrate its relevance to the surrounding community. To contribute to the field's body of knowledge, faculty members presented information on the purpose, desired outcomes, teaching methods, and means of community involvement to recreation practitioners at the most recent state conference. Faculty members involved in this program will soon begin a research project to examine teaching and learning outcomes for both University and elementary students as a result of

their involvement with Walk the Wasatch. This is but another example of how an engaged recreation program can result in scholarship.

### **Outdoor Leadership Initiative**

PRT has enjoyed a strong research relationship with the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) for decades. PRT's faculty has contributed much to the design, implementation, and evaluation of NOLS programs, and that same expertise is now being applied to the design, implementation, and evaluation of U-EXPLORE's offerings. The faculty is especially interested in outdoor leadership and the role of instructors in facilitating learning in outdoor recreation contexts. Once again, through the scholarship of engagement, a research agenda aimed at improving professional practice is under way. PRT has appointed a new U-EXPLORE assistant coordinator, whose research expertise will be directed at better understanding the impact of learning outcomes from U-EXPLORE's offerings.

### **Honors College Freshmen Orientation Initiative**

Finally, PRT recently piloted its first outdoor recreation-based freshman orientation experience for the Honors College that demonstrated the full breadth of what PRT can do for the University of Utah. A group of 30 Honors College freshmen began their university education with a multi-day rafting trip on the Green River, intended to build a sense of camaraderie and community as well as introduce them to Utah's richly diverse landscape. The students then participated in a semester long leadership course taught by PRT faculty that included additional outdoor recreation skill development. Lastly, the students employed what they learned in the context of outdoor leadership to a community engaged learning project.

To further improve the lives of students, demonstrate the relevance of outdoor recreation programs, and work toward a scholarly product, PRT faculty members have partnered with faculty in psychology to collect data on attention restoration among students while they live and learn in the outdoors. Faculty members intend to analyze and share their findings on the programs' effectiveness among students in a peer reviewed format. This program and subsequent evaluation is very relevant to the University of Utah's campus community as the University has committed itself to providing "significant learning experiences" for all undergraduates. The Honors College outdoor recreation freshman orientation experience is a highly innovative way to launch such a commitment and could eventually be ratcheted up to include additional incoming freshman groups. We understand that many students seeking a higher education struggle with the transition of leaving home and moving to college, and we expect Honors College freshmen to benefit from a program that reduces a sense of anonymity that can come with attending a large metropolitan university. Contributing to the resolution of these kinds of difficulties through the U-EXPLORE program brings PRT to the forefront of what the University of Utah is trying to achieve in its efforts to attract, retain, and graduate students from around the world.

In each of these examples, the challenge has been to intentionally design an initiative that marries teaching and learning, scholarship, and service in a way that emphasizes service and illustrates the symbiotic nature of the traditional tripartite professorial responsibility. The focus is on learning by doing under the guidance of professors, practitioners, and relevant theory. In their ideal state, teaching, scholarship, and service inform and build upon one another. That is the promise of the scholarship of engagement. Teaching is back



and forth. Service is give and take. Scholarship is a two-way street. In the end, the litmus test of the scholarship of engagement is improved professional practice to better serve the community.

### **Rethinking Impact Factor**

Unfortunately, the gap between professors' roles (service, teaching, and research) and institutional reward structures continues to exist. And until such time that research universities recognize, honor, and reward the scholarship of engagement, the scholarship on teaching and learning, training grants and contracts, local as well as national and international reputations, and improving professional practice as equally important measures of impact factor, it is reasonable to ask, "Where is the incentive for this kind of work?" For example, the aforementioned initiatives are taking place at a research university. Skeptics may question the wisdom of devoting so much time to these efforts when the university's emphasis centers on the scholarship of discovery, externally funded research, national and international reputations, and impact factor as measured by citations in scholarly journals.

We believe the answer resides in the proven relevance of the work professors do. If Handlin's (1990) observation is correct that our planet can no longer afford universities separated from the problems confronting the world around them, if scholarship has to prove its worth by its usefulness in meeting the needs of the larger community, and if the distinguishing feature of the American scholar is indeed a commitment to service, then the scholarship of engagement and the scholarship on teaching and learning are important and timely expressions of a professor's relevance and ultimate worth.

The ongoing challenge, of course, is to demonstrate the impacts of the scholarship of engagement and the scholarship on teaching and learning through carefully thought out design, implementation, and evaluation of the work and student learning that occurs in the name of service. This is the primary research challenge facing the University of Utah's U-EXPLORE program. It must demonstrate the impact of its curricular approach through collaborative research with students and practitioners alike in the context of professional practice. This will require constant monitoring and documentation of the benefits accruing from the scholarship of engagement and artifacts that demonstrate student learning, especially as that learning reflects active learning, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. Fortunately, these forms of scholarship are well-suited for academicians working in an applied discipline like parks, recreation, and tourism. PRT's scholars need not apologize for the applied nature of their work. Indeed, it is time we champion what we do in the name of social and environmental relevance. What better way to illustrate the positive impact of our scholarship than to demonstrate scientifically its usefulness to the amelioration of society's ills?

### **Conclusion**

Boyer closed *Scholarship Reconsidered* by challenging university presidents to lead the way in redefining scholarship and restructuring the faculty reward system to honor the diversity of ways professors contribute to the aims of higher education. He also challenged the professoriate itself to take more responsibility for broadening retention, promotion, and tenure standards in a way that recognizes the scholarship of integration, engagement, and teaching and learning, as well as the scholarship of discovery. O'Meara and Rice (2005) have

since expanded Boyer's thinking as have Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone (2011). They have identified progress made (e.g., Evans, Grace, & Roen, 2005) as well as obstacles remaining in the path (Diamond, 2005) of realizing Boyer's vision of a more meaningful assessment of a professor's academic worth. Several universities have responded to Boyer's call by adopting a teacher-scholar model for their faculty (O'Meara & Rice, 2005), including California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, the academic home of two of this article's authors. However, an Academic Senate resolution of a teacher-scholar model is only the first step. The culture surrounding retention, promotion, and tenure is ultimately developed and fostered at the department level. It is one thing to say broadly, "We support the teacher-scholar model," but another thing entirely to more boldly define exactly what that means at the department level and stand up for the ideal that the scholarship of engagement and the scholarship on teaching and learning matters when it comes to tenure, promotion, and raises. Boyer called for such changes in the name of relevance. History teaches us that universities change their orientation to teaching, scholarship, and service in response to changing social conditions. We live in a time when the citizenry is demanding more than ever before to know how publicly supported universities make a positive difference in the surrounding community. It is time to show them through deed, documentation, and sharing results for peer review.

Faculty members in departments of parks, recreation, and tourism may never compete successfully for large NIH grants, we may never win a Nobel Prize, and we may never generate new money-making patents for our universities. But we do play a central role in all kinds of universities, including research universities. Our forte is the scholarship of engagement with its complementary service-learning opportunities, and we can play a critical role in what the university is trying to accomplish locally, nationally, and internationally. Knowing who we are and what our strengths are should inspire faculty members in this discipline to play an active and highly visible role in the universities we serve. Adopting "service first" as an orientation to our work is an important step in demonstrating our relevance and worth to the academic enterprise.

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