

## **Bound by tradition? Peer review and new scholarship: An institutional case study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Peer review is by no means a routine process for traditional, or basic, research. Even so, peer review is even less routinized for other forms of scholarship. In 1990, Ernest Boyer called for a reconsideration of scholarship and extended the definition to be inclusive of non-traditional modes of scholarly production and delivery. However, peer review processes for non-traditional scholarship modes have proven difficult to assess and implement. An examination of promotion and tenure documents at a regional comprehensive university reveals the various strategies departments use to provide peer review for work faculty consider to be non-traditional. The study found five models for peer review of non-traditional scholarship that have implications for other institutions seeking to recognize and reward non-traditional scholarship.

Keywords: Peer Review/Evaluation, Non-traditional scholarship, Professional Development, Faculty Development, Higher Education

## INTRODUCTION

Kerry Ann O'Meara and Eugene Rice interviewed Chief Academic Officers at over 700 institutions regarding teaching, research and service throughout the 1990s (O'Meara, 2005). Their findings show that the majority report that publication productivity counted more at the end of the decade than at the beginning. Coincidentally, research associated with engagement, teaching, and professional work was introduced by Boyer (1990) as valid forms of scholarship that should be rewarded at academic institutions. Prior to rewarding faculty members for their broadened scholarly work, institutions must first participate in the assessment of that work. The most common and most accepted form of assessment for scholarly work involves the double-blind editorial peer review process. How does the peer review process for the non-traditional scholarship play out for faculty? How has the process been institutionalized in documents such as the tenure and promotion documents that serve as agreements between faculty members and their departments?

### Peer review

The scholarly academies of the eighteenth century pioneered the use of peer review in evaluating each other's work (Drummond, 1999). At first confined to members, the use of outside reviewers became common practice by the late nineteenth century, largely due to the growing volume of scholarship being produced and disseminated (Spier, 2002). Single-blind and double-blind systems intermingled until after World War II, when the double-blind process, in which the authors do not know their reviewers and the reviewers do not know the authors, prevailed. Proponents of the system claim that it provides the most reliable, valid and objective means by which academic scholarship can be assessed (Bedeian, 2004; Ware, 2008; Weller, 2001).

Indeed, the prepublication, double-blind peer review system has evolved into the standard for academic work today and a prominent journal editor has labeled it "absolutely sacred" (McCook, 2006). The system, though, is not without its critics (Suls and Martin, 2009). Since the 1980s, the system has received a great deal of criticism for being a non-standardized, unreliable and unfair way to validate the quality of the manuscript and a process which often benefits prominent researchers (Horrobin, 1982; Jefferson, 2002; Lock, 1985; Shatz, 2004; Smit, 2006; Starbuck, 2003; Weller, 2001; Wenneras & Wold, 2007). Further, from the production side, the process has been labeled unwieldy, expensive, and ineffective (Rennie, 1999; Okerson & McDonald, 1995). Finally, peer review has been shown to be inherently conservative, favoring conventional practice over innovation (Epstein, 1995; Forsdyke, 2007; Mahoney, 1977).

Because the process has become so closely intertwined with definitions of quality, efforts to revise or expand peer review mechanisms have met with considerable resistance from both within and outside of academia. Faculty, according to Eugene Rice, tend to live in an "assumptive world" and the identification of quality with the double-blind peer review process is one of the primary assumptions upon which the review of scholarship is based (Rice, 1996). In other words, without peer review at its base, the entire edifice of scholarly publication, even academic culture, finds itself on highly unstable ground. The impetus for non-traditional forms of scholarship only further destabilizes the ground on which peer review rests.

## Non-traditional scholarship and peer review

For most disciplines, traditional scholarship involves print publication via established journals or texts produced by reputable publishers. These venues have long been the bastions of the double-blind peer review process and represent lengthy and recognized traditions for establishing quality control. While there are some disciplinary exceptions (such as performance in the arts), the double-blind process remains the gold standard by which the quality of academic work is measured. One of the proposed benefits of Ernest Boyer's model of scholarship is that it opened the doors to a wider range of faculty work being recognized and rewarded as scholarship. That range does not simply include the recognition of different types of scholarly activities, but also different scholarly products and/or different means of scholarly communication, many of which the traditional peer review system is ill-equipped to handle (Reuter & Bauer, 2005).

The pioneers of the Boyer scholarship model emphasized the need for largely conventional peer review processes as the mechanism through which the newly-recognized forms would be assessed and validated (Fincher & Work, 2006; Shulman, 1999). This has proven to be easier to do in theory than in practice (Schweitzer, 2000) and scholars have debated whether the problem is with the Boyer model, the peer review process, or both (Boshier, 2009).

After Boyer identified the four types of scholarship, other colleagues at the Carnegie Institute began the work of studying how they could be assessed. They proposed a review model that defined high-quality scholarly work as possessing clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, outstanding results, effective communication, and a reflective critique (Glassick, Huber & Maeroff, 1997; Glassick, 2000). While this model addresses the need for clear standards of review, the basis of it was a distillation of the standards used by traditional peer-review outlets, including major publishers, journal editors, and grant agencies. On the subject of the special issues inherent in non-traditional scholarship, the authors certainly acknowledge the issue, commenting that "it takes imagination" to document non-traditional scholarship (Glassick et al, 1997). That being said, their solutions largely focus on creating portfolios to capture the scholarship of teaching and learning and they do little more to discuss non-traditional products that stem from other areas of Boyer scholarship, such as application/engagement or integration. This study shows how one university attempted to reconcile the standards set by *Scholarship Assessed*, the Boyer model of scholarship, non-traditional scholarly products, and peer review across all disciplines. By examining the tenure and promotion documents at a regional comprehensive university, the researchers reveal the various strategies of peer review that worked for non-traditional scholarly products.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Sample

Those who have advocated for an expansion of peer-review processes to include non-traditional products have strongly suggested that such cultural changes must first begin at the campus level and must take into account not only a variety of disciplinary cultures, but also institutional cultures (Bergquist, 1992; Diamond, 1999; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Schein, 1992). For the purposes of this study, the institutional culture under consideration is Western Carolina University. Begun in the nineteenth century as a teachers' college, Western Carolina University has evolved into a medium-sized, regional comprehensive university, ranked Masters Level II in

the Carnegie classification system. Not dissimilar to land grant universities, regional comprehensive institutions often have explicit community engagement missions which can make the adoption of broader definitions of scholarship more attractive (Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; O'Meara & Jaeger, 2007). Located in a rural area, Western Carolina University is no exception and has recently received the "engaged" designation from Carnegie in recognition of its mission in regional development.

In 2008, Western Carolina University formally adopted the Boyer model of scholarship into its recognition and reward systems. Using a template provided by the Office of the Provost, departments were empowered to translate the Boyer directive through the lens of their respective disciplinary cultures. The Provost, in collaboration with the Faculty Senate, affirmed the principle of departmental autonomy, requiring the new documents only to recognize the four types of Boyer scholarship in some way and to provide some kind of mechanism for peer review of non-traditional scholarship. Curious about the results of the process, a small group of researchers from the Western Carolina University faculty examined the ways peer review for non-traditional scholarship is implemented in departments across campus through these revised tenure and promotion documents (abbreviated CRD for Collegial Review Document). For the sake of the study, this includes 33 of these documents (all departments on campus) effective in the Fall of 2008.

### **Coding**

The template requires evaluation of three typical domains: teaching, scholarship and creative works, and service. Each domain requires that the department specify the methods used for evaluation and sources of evidence that are appropriate for each domain. Generally, each department's expectation for peer review for the scholarship of application appeared in the methods and sources section of the Scholarship and Creative Works domain.

## **RESULTS**

### **Prior Review Procedures for Scholarship of Engagement Scholarly Activities**

Because these processes, indeed these scholarly products, are new, approximately one-third of all departments at Western Carolina University (10 out of 33) either required or strongly suggested that faculty discuss non-traditional projects with either the department head, dean, or collegial review committee prior to undertaking the scholarly activity. Prior review was most prevalent in the Western Carolina University School of Engineering and Technology (2 of 2 departments) and in the College of Arts and Sciences (3 of 11 departments). These peer review processes are varied and involve internal and external reviewers and range from quite informal to more formal processes.

When the peer review processes for internal review involved internal reviewers, only rarely was that internal reviewer a department head. However, one CRD document suggested that faculty members consult with their department head for feedback as to the Boyer classification of the proposed scholarly activity:

"Discipline-specific proprietary work may [be considered scholarship of application or engagement] in which case, appropriate discussion should be had with the department head,

early in the process to determine how the work will be classified." (pg. 3, Department of Accounting, Finance, Information Systems and Economics, College of Business)

Beyond simple classification of the scholarly activity, a typically an informal conversation with a department head would likely also include other project aspects as well. While processes involving feedback from department heads were only mentioned once, processes with feedback from groups or committees were much more frequent. Generally, when processes involved only internal reviewers providing pre-project feedback, the reviewers were identified as those serving on the departmental collegial review committee. Representative statements from the CRD documents appear below:

"The candidate may request prior review of the proposed project in order to get feedback from the Collegial Review Advisory Committee" (pg. 15, Department of Early and Middle Grades Education, College of Education and Allied Professions).

"Faculty who seek to pursue projects that will require customized peer review should make the head of the department aware at an early stage and should receive regular feedback from the department personnel committee to ensure that both the individual's and the department's expectations for the scope, the viability, and the scholarly quality of the project are maintained" (pg. 9, Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences).

In 40% of the cases (4 out of 10), pre-project feedback procedures explicitly mention external reviewers.

"The candidate may request a prior review of the proposed project in order to get feedback from the TPR Advisory Committee. The TPR Advisory Committee may solicit outside reviewers if necessary. In these cases of prior review, the TPR Advisory Committee will provide written feedback to the faculty member for inclusion in their dossier or other evaluation materials, and a copy will also be provided to the Department Head for placement in the faculty member's departmental file" (pg. 7, Department of Communication, College of Arts and Sciences).

"In cases where the candidate seeks prior review of a proposed project, the CRD committee should consult with experts at peer institutions to perform the peer review function, but would supply candidate with written feedback, so as to be included in dossier or other evaluation materials and a copy would be submitted to dept head for candidate's files" (pg. 6, Department of Philosophy and Religion, College of Arts and Sciences).

One school, the Western Carolina University School of Engineering and Technology, created a formal Engagement Committee, charged with reviewing projects involving the scholarship of engagement. The Engagement Committee, which includes both internal and external members, is appointed by the Dean and serves at the discretion of the Dean. A minimum of two of the Engagement Committee members also serve on the college Collegial Review Committee. Both departments in the Western Carolina University School, Construction Management and the Department of Engineering and Technology, use identical language in their

CRD documents to outline procedures for prior review of scholarly activities by the Engagement Committee:

“Specifically, the [Engagement] Committee is responsible for ... pre-screening of engagement activities to ensure that they match the mission of the department and the resources available [and] assistance in developing roadmaps for success in the planning, implementation and documentation of Scholarship of Application programs...” (pg. 26, Department of Engineering and Technology, Kimmel School of Engineering and Technology).

While the documents do not specifically state the reasons for encouraging or requiring prior review, it can be surmised that the process is designed to address the risks inherent in pursuing new forms of scholarship by establishing clear expectations, on both sides, of where and how the scholarly activity will be recognized and rewarded. This practice is also in keeping with the recommendations made by KerryAnn O’Meara and Eugene Rice as a result of their national study on redefining scholarship (O’Meara and Rice, 2005).

## **Review Procedures**

### ***Internal Review***

The Office of the Provost initially specified only that the CRD documents contain a mechanism for review of non-traditional scholarship. In a handful of cases (2), departments determined that internal review would be sufficient:

"Evidence of scholarship may be evaluated by the Department Head, and if applicable, by a Peer Evaluation Committee of tenured faculty members within the Department of the faculty member being evaluated” (pg. 3, Department of Modern Foreign Languages, College of Arts and Sciences)

“The Committee is organized and managed at the direction of the Department Head. The Committee has both pre-screening and post-review evaluation responsibilities over Scholarship of Application programs. Specifically, the committee is responsible for: Pre-screening of engagement activities to ensure that they match the mission of the department and the resources available ... Validation as Scholarship of Application Additionally, the results of scholarly engagement may be documented through report(s) from stakeholders and/or clients documenting the magnitude of delivery and/or impact resulting from the engagement activities and application of disciplinary expertise” (Appendix D, School of Physical Therapy, College of Health and Human Services).

Upon review of all of the CRD documents in their entirety, the Provost determined that some form of external review would be required and asked that these departments to revise their standards accordingly.

**External Review**

Initially, most departments (31 out of 33 or 94%) required external evaluation for peer review. The researchers discerned that the departments at Western Carolina University created five processes, or models, for peer review of non-traditional scholarship, detailed below.

Figure 1: The Five Processes of Peer Review for the Scholarship of Engagement and Departments within Colleges Following Each Process

Process → College ↓	Faculty Documentation	Open Process	Reviewer Selection with Faculty Involvement	Reviewer Selection by Committee	Reviewer Selection by Dept. Head or Dean
<b>College of Health and Human Sciences (HHS)</b> PT-internal	<b>HHS-Criminology and Criminal Justice</b> <b>HHS-School of Nursing</b>	<b>HHS-School of Health Sciences</b>	<b>HHS-Communication Sciences and Disorders</b> <b>HHS-Social Work</b>		
<b>College of Business (BUS)</b>	<b>BUS-Business Admin. and Law and Sport Management</b>	<b>BUS-Acct., Fin., Info. Sys. and Econ.</b> <b>BUS-Center for Entrepreneurship</b> <b>BUS-Prof. Sales &amp; Marketing and Hospitality and Tourism</b>			<b>BUS-Global Management. and Strategy</b>
<b>College of Education and Allied Professions (EAP)</b>		<b>EAP-Human Services</b>	<b>EAP-Education Leadership and Foundations</b> <b>EAP-Early and Middle Grades Education</b> <b>EAP-Health, Physical Ed., and Recreation</b> <b>EAP-Psychology</b>		
<b>College of Fine and Performing Arts (FPAC)</b>	<b>FPAC-School of Art and Design</b>		<b>FPAC-School of Music</b>		<b>FPAC-Stage and Screen</b>
<b>College of Arts and Sciences (AS)</b> MFL-internal	<b>AS-Geology and Natural Resources</b>	<b>AS-Biology</b> <b>AS-Chemistry and Physics</b> <b>AS-Math and Computer Science</b>	<b>AS-English</b>	<b>AS-Anthropology and Sociology</b> <b>AS-Communication</b> <b>AS-History</b> <b>AS-Philosophy and Religion</b> <b>AS-Political Science and Public Admin.</b>	
Western Carolina University School (KS) 2/2					<b>KS-Construction Management</b> <b>KS-Engineering and Technology</b>

Library		<b>LIB-Library</b>			
	5 (15.2%)	<b>9 (27.3%)</b>	8 (24.2%)	5 (15.2%)	<b>4 (12.1%)</b>

**Model 1: Faculty Documentation of Scholarly Activities**

Several departments (5 out of 33 or 15%) chose to allow faculty candidates to determine their own processes for review and to determine an appropriate defense for the quality of their scholarship. Typical statements from departmental CRD documents appear below.

“It is recognized that infrequently a candidate may present “interesting things” that do not fit well with these categories yet are still legitimate scholarship. It will be up to the candidate to defend the activities as scholarship based on their extraordinary nature.” (pg. 9, Department of Business Administration and Law and Sport Management, College of Business)

“It will be up to the candidate to defend the activities as scholarship based on their extraordinary nature and process of external peer review, or justifying why an activity should be moved to a higher classification.” (pg. 4, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, College of Health and Human Services)

“In cases where scholarly work does not fit the traditional academic peer review model it is the responsibility of the faculty member to document in writing how their scholarship fits into the model.” (pg. 4, Department of Biology, College of Arts and Sciences)

“Faculty should document whether their scholarly activities are peer reviewed, invited, peer evaluated, or anonymous peer review or evaluation. Faculty should also note if publications were subject to an editorial board or other editorial review.” (pg. 6, School of Nursing, College of Health and Human Services)

“When there is no traditional peer review process, the faculty member must document how the work will advance the discipline, how the work has been reviewed, and how it will be disseminated.” (pg. 3, Department of Geology and Natural Resources, College of Arts and Sciences)

“External review of activities is required for consideration of reappointment, tenure, promotion, post tenure review and merit pay. ... Faculty members are required to list scholarly activities and note those activities that meet the criteria for scholarship through external peer review.”

In sum, these departments chose to handle non-traditional scholarship on a case-by-case basis, giving the burden of proof of external review to the faculty member wishing to pursue such scholarship.

**Model 2: Open Process**

In 27% of the cases (9 out of 33), departments specified external reviewers but did not indicate a specific process for determining how the external reviewers would be determined. Representative statements of this process include the following.

“...scholarship must be externally reviewed by a recognized organization.” (pg. 3, Department of Math and Computer Science, College of Arts and Sciences)

“Peer review can include traditional forms (e.g., journal reviewers, editors, committees awarding grants), but it can also include a broader community of scholars.” (pg. 3, Department of Chemistry and Physics, College of Arts and Sciences)

“All scholarship must be peer reviewed. We define peer review as the evaluation of the scholarly work by people external to Western Carolina University with knowledge and expertise in the discipline in order to determine the quality of the work; and where the work is made known to the faculty member and others, as appropriate for the work being evaluated.” (pg. 4, Department of Biology, College of Arts and Sciences)

“Peer reviewed works for all forms of scholarship will include those reviewed by one or more qualified professionals, external to WCU, in the applicant's field of expertise.” (pg. 3, Department of Human Services, College of Education and Allied Professions)

Unpublished scholarly activities meet the definition of scholarship if they appear in a publicly observable form; in other words, it must be public, subject to critical review, and in a form allowing the use and exchange by other members of the discipline (Shuler & Hutchings, 1998). Unpublished scholarly activity can take the form of a paper, poster, an audio or videotape presentation, written report, or Web site (Braxton & Del Favero, 2002). (pg2, School of Health Sciences , College of Health and Human Services)(  
In all cases, externally peer reviewed outcomes are most highly valued in all four scholarship areas. (pg. 3, School of Health Sciences, College of Health and Human Services)

All scholarly activities of library faculty that result in the production of scholarship, regardless of Boyer category (Boyer, Ernest L. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Princeton, N.J.: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990), are assessed against the following general criteria: (1) the scholarship is subjected to peer review. External peer review may be provided by a number of sources outside of the Western Carolina University community (pg. 5, ZZZ Library)

Scholarship that has no obvious external peer review structure in place undergoes peer review by a separate process. For such scholarship, the library identifies qualified library professionals outside ZZZZ Library with recognized professional standing in the relevant area of scholarly activity and requests independent reviews of the quality and impact of the scholarship in question. (pg. 6, ZZZ Library)

Several departments in the College of Business had nearly identical wording:

"To count within the category, the activity must lead to an artifact that is evaluated by discipline experts who agree the work is a quality expression of one of Boyer's forms of scholarship...." (pg. 4, Department of Professional Sales & Marketing and Hospitality and Tourism, College of Business)

"To count within the category, the activity must lead to an artifact that is evaluated by discipline experts, external to the University, who agree the work is a quality expression of one of Boyer's forms of scholarship...." (pg. 3, Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, College of Business)

These same two departments, Center for Entrepreneurship and Professional Sales, Marketing and Hospitality and Tourism, had identical wording regarding the possible makeup of the reviewers.

"External critical review must be provided by either an accepted review process at a recognized journal in the discipline or related discipline, by a sponsoring agency providing funding or oversight, the university administration or university system administration or other recognized entity outside the department with the expertise to critically evaluate the artifact without bias." (pg. 4, Professional Sales, Marketing and Hospitality and Tourism, College of Business)

For many disciplines, non-traditional scholarship is new territory and without precedents to draw from, departments often flexibility over specificity. Those departments in this category chose to emphasize the principle of external peer review, but left the practice, or process, of selection and evaluation open. This emphasis on external peer review separates these departments from those in the previous category, but others chose to provide more explicit guidelines for deciding who chooses reviewers and how they are to be selected.

### **Model 3: Reviewer Selection with Faculty Involvement**

Many departments (8 out of 33, or 24%) chose to establish external peer review processes that included faculty involvement. Typically, that faculty involvement meant that the faculty member selected three to five potential reviewers of which the department head, often acting in concert with the departmental Collegial Review Committee, selected at least one to serve as an external reviewer along with another reviewer selected without faculty involvement. Thus, the faculty member generally has the power to select half the reviewers who will formally review the non-traditional scholarly project.

The majority of departments in the College of Education and Applied Professions (3 out of 5, or 60%); including Education Leadership Foundations, Health and Physical Education, and Psychology presented nearly identical statements regarding faculty involvement in the external reviewer selection process:

"at the time of the third-year reappointment...the candidate will submit to the department head up to five names and contact info for potential external reviewers. All of the potential reviewers should have expertise in the candidate's discipline, hold the terminal degree in the field, and be employed (or have been employed) as a faculty member in an institution of higher education. Familiarity with Boyer's model of scholarship is expected. The department

head will identify two external reviewers who agree to review the candidate's materials. At least one of those reviewers should be from the list submitted by the candidate. If the other reviewer is not on the candidate's list, s/he should have the same qualifications as described [above]" (Appendix E, Department of Education, Leadership and Foundations, College of Education and Applied Professions).

In one of the eight cases in this group, faculty members have the ability to select more than half of the team of reviewers who will ascertain the quality of their scholarship of engagement projects and products.

"The standard for customized types of peer review will be a panel of 3 external reviewers, who will write a substantive peer review of the project that will become part of the CRD dossier. Faculty will submit a list of five potential reviewers to the Personnel Committee; if the faculty member so desires, two other potential reviewers may be specifically excluded from the panel....The Head and the Committee have the right but are not required to select a third reviewer not on the list of potential reviewers" (pg. 9, Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences).

In two departments, the candidate selects all the reviewers who will review the work.

"External reviewers will be approved by the Department Head after selection by the candidate."(pg. 7, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, College of Health and Human Sciences)

"For such activities, taken individually or as a whole, appropriate peer review may be established by letters of support from peers external to the university who have personal knowledge of specific demonstrations of a candidate's expertise and who document this knowledge in their letters (i.e., the letter must be more specific than a general letter of recommendation and must clearly state the nature of the demonstration of expertise to which the writer was witness, along with the date and venue of the presentation). External peer review may also be established by inviting, at the discretion of the Candidate, Director, Dean or the Collegial Review Committee with regard to how that candidate's record would compare to candidates for a similar personnel action at the peer institution. If an external reviewer is invited, the Candidate may submit the names of up to three peer institutions and up to three individuals whom he or she considers to be peers, from which the Collegial Review Committee in consultation with the Director and Dean shall select the external reviewer. The external reviewer may, at the discretion of the Director, Dean and the Collegial Review Committee, participate in the actual deliberations of the Committee, but without a vote. It is up to the candidate to make the case that his or her scholarship and creative activity has been appropriately reviewed by peers external to the University." (pg. 6, School of Music, College of Fine and Performing Arts)

In this model, the process grants the faculty member some agency. While more limited than in previous models in which faculty documented the external review, this process allows the faculty member to assist the members of the Collegial Review committee in identifying qualified reviewers because the level of specialization, even within departments, can make such

identifications challenging. Therefore, it is not surprising to see especially diverse departments appear in this category.

This process may also look familiar to those outside of Western Carolina University, as this model is not dissimilar to those used by other institutions when considering an applicant for tenure. While Western Carolina University does not require external review of a scholarly body of work for tenure, these statements indicate that the faculty at Western Carolina University are familiar with these procedures and are co-opting them for the purposes of evaluating non-traditional scholarship. These procedures are not without controversies of their own, many of which resonate with critiques of peer review more broadly (Rhodes-Catanach & Stout, 2002; Schlozman, 1998; Schwartz & Schroeder, 1997) but it does allow departments to use a recognized and established procedure, albeit with a slightly different objective.

#### **Model 4: Reviewer Selection by Committee**

Other departments at Western Carolina University (5 out of 33, 15%) chose to specify peer review processes that did not include faculty involvement. Rather, these processes left the selection of external reviewers to the Collegial Review committees, usually in consultation with the department head.

“The department’s TPR Advisory Committee will judge whether a unit has been achieved on a case-by-case basis...”(pg. 4) “Using these general guidelines, the department’s TPR Advisory Committee will determine “unit” totals for each faculty member being reviewed. (pg. 5) “The TPR Advisory Committee may solicit outside reviews if necessary.” (pg. 7, Department of Communication, College of Arts and Sciences)

“For scholarly work with no extant peer review process, the Department Head, in consultation with the Department Collegial Review Committee, will create a formal peer review process which will result in at least two written assessments of the work in question by qualified external reviewers. These assessments will be filed in the Department office and will be included in tenure and promotion dossiers.” (pg. 4, Department of History, College of Arts and Sciences)

“Peer review will include traditional forms (journal/book reviews, editors) but can also include broader communities of scholars (retired professionals, invited addresses at conferences or other academic or professional institutions) as recognized by the department...(pg. 4). Were a candidate to explore scholarly activities that would fit in some of the other Boyer categories, the department would count them, insofar as the candidate could defend and document those activities as genuine scholarship. Should it be needed, the CRD Committee will consult outside reviewers for advice.” (pg. 6, Department of Philosophy and Religion, College of Arts and Sciences)

The department of Anthropology and Sociology and the department of Political Science and Public Affairs had identical wording

“In the case of scholarship where a traditional external review is not possible, the Department Head in consultation with the Departmental CRC will create a formal peer

review process which will result in at least two positive written assessments of the work in question by qualified external reviewers. These assessments will be filed in the departmental office and will be included in tenure and promotion dossiers.” (pg. 5, Department of Political Science and Public Affairs, College of Arts and Sciences) (pg. 3-4, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, College of Arts and Sciences)

The double-blind peer review process enjoys its hallowed status due, in some part, to its emphasis on objectivity. In this process, objectivity is privileged and maintained in two ways. First, the faculty member does not participate in the selection of external reviewers, thus removing potential bias, and the committee and department head must work together to determine reviewers, thus controlling for potential bias on the part of individual department members. The latter check and balance is removed in the next process.

#### **Model 5: Reviewer Selection by Department Head or Dean**

Four departments (4 out of 33, or 21%) specified an external peer review process that did not include either the faculty member or the department head. In these cases, the selection of external peer reviewers was left to the discretion of the department head and/or dean of the college. Typical statements from these departments appear below:

“When scholarship is non-traditional (e.g. scholarship other than traditional paper presentations and journal articles), at least two reviewers external to the university will be selected by the department head.” (pg. 2-3, Global Strategy and Management, College of Business)

“Members of the Western Carolina University School Engagement Committee serve at the discretion of the dean. This committee may have and normally will have both internal and external members. The dean serves as the chair.... A minimum of two members of the Western Carolina University School tenure and promotion committee also serve on the committee.... Due to the proprietary nature of some engagement projects, peer review and dissemination may be restricted to the committee and the client's organization.” (pg. 26, Department of Engineering and Technology, Western Carolina University School of Engineering and Technology)

“...To facilitate the development and evaluation of these [Scholarship of Application] activities, the Department Head convenes the ...Collegial Review Committee as required. The committee is organized and managed at the direction of the Department Head.... The committee is responsible for pre-screening of engagement activities....” (pg. 35, School of Physical Therapy)

O’Meara notes that faculty from master’s level institutions tend to be more wary of administrative directives and control (O’Meara, 2006), so it is somewhat surprising to find this model in place at Western Carolina University. That being said, it should be noted that both departments in the Western Carolina University School of Engineering chose this process, perhaps a reflection of the relatively small size of the college and/or the existence of a pre-

screening committee for prior review, which establishes guidelines that the dean and/or department head is obliged to follow.

## IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

In other studies of institutional change, regional comprehensive universities have proven to be prone to mission drift, or the tendency for institutional focus or identities to become less focused or distinct than other institutional types (Henderson, 2009; O'Meara, 2005). Multiple scholars have attested to the critical need to align scholarship expectations with institutional mission (regardless of type), but that can be difficult if that mission is unclear or subject to frequent changes (O'Meara, 2005). Further, the lack of identity can lead to increased faculty workloads, resulting in some of the lowest rates of faculty satisfaction of any institutional type, despite rising enrollment and faculty employment trends (Henderson, 2007).

This concern with workloads that result in highly-splayed legs of the traditional three-legged stool (teaching, research, and service) also affects new scholarship. In their analysis of a landmark survey of chief academic officers, O'Meara and Rice (2005) identified five barriers to the adoption of the Boyer model of scholarship. Among those, they ranked "faculty concerns about unrealistic expectations that excel in all areas at the same time" as the fourth largest obstacle, one that clearly applies to many regional comprehensive universities, including Western Carolina University. The assertion, or reassertion, of service or engagement missions has helped many regional comprehensives address the issue of drift and provides an impetus for providing incorporating a broader definition of scholarship, particularly one that incorporates the scholarship of engagement. This was precisely what inspired Western Carolina University to pursue the adoption of the Boyer model, but it is the same scholarship of engagement which can provoke the most challenges to traditional forms of scholarship, and, in turn, peer review.

It should be noted that Boyer scholarship and non-traditional scholarship are not synonymous. It is possible to do traditional scholarship across the four facets of the Boyer model, and it is also possible to do non-traditional scholarship of discovery, or basic research. Boyer focused on recognizing different types of scholarly activity, while the non-traditional moniker refers to either a non-traditional scholarly product and/or a non-traditional form of scholarly communication. One of the primary findings of this study has been the lack of a clear definition for the term "non-traditional" scholarship. In most cases, these new scholarly products are referred to largely by what they are not, *i.e.* printed journal articles or books. This negative identity leaves the question of exactly what they are open for debate. For example, in the fine and performing arts non-printed scholarship, such as performance or creative works, has long been the norm. Does that mean that those faculty have, ironically, been practicing non-traditional scholarship for a long time or does it mean that they, too, must find new scholarly products to address the other areas of scholarship in the Boyer model? In many ways, non-traditional scholarship could be just about anything, from a playground to a festival to a report, to an exhibit and so on—*ad infinitum*, but surely there must exist a sufficiently common core that defines these products as scholarship, one that can be delineated and operationalized to enhance evaluation and reward.

In O'Meara and Rice's survey, "unevenness in applying new criteria within and across units" (O'Meara & Rice, 2005) ranked as the fifth obstacle to the adoption of the Boyer model of scholarship. At Western Carolina University, the Office of the Provost required only that departments provide a mechanism for external review of non-traditional products, but they did not otherwise specify how that should be done, leaving the operational task to departments. As

this study has shown, there was considerable variation in how departments chose to address new forms of peer review. The experiences of Western Carolina University suggest that there is a fine balance to be struck between flexibility and consistency in implementing processes for the review of new forms and types of scholarship. Without an established national or international model to use as a guideline, the departments at Western Carolina University turned towards their respective disciplines, their own experiences at other institutions, and to their colleagues and peers for guidance in creating systems that fit with both departmental and institutional norms.

While the departments at Western Carolina University enjoyed considerable flexibility in the documentation of external peer review, this did not result in 33 different processes. Rather, the results of the study show five distinct models for establishing external peer review. The difference between these models revolves around the question of who makes the decisions regarding external peer review processes, and departments varied from full faculty responsibility (model 1, section 2a) to full administrative responsibility (model 5, section 2e). For institutions considering not only the Boyer model, but the inclusion of non-traditional scholarship with or without Boyer, these models should prove helpful in shaping campus discussions about the possibilities for ownership and decision-making regarding external peer review for non-traditional scholarship.

This study focused on the tenure and promotion documents of each respective department at Western Carolina University. As such, the findings are indicative of policy, but are indirect indicators, at best, of practice or perception. Because the study was limited to these documents, the researchers have chosen not to speculate on the reasons behind the disciplinary patterns that emerged, but that will be the subject of future study. Those of us who have served on policy committees can attest that policy formation is often influenced by factors such as personality, context, interest, and time commitment. The documents themselves are works in progress, and many of the departments have continued to revise their practices as more faculty vie for tenure and promotion under the new definitions of scholarship. In a cursory examination of approved documents for 2011, for example, the researchers found that more departments had moved from models 1 (section 2a) and 2 (section 2b) to models 3 (section 2c) and 4 (section 2d), suggesting a growing consensus toward shared governance and/or more transparent processes. Even with some trends towards consensus, the study captured a piece of what can best be described as a moving or evolving target.

Similarly, it will be useful to continue to monitor these processes as they move into second and even third generation contexts. Because Western Carolina University adopted these standards in 2008, some second generation issues have already appeared. These include, but are not limited to, the difficulty of identifying and training peer reviewers, particularly those who come from outside of academia. Western Carolina University has created a peer review task force tasked with creating a bank of potential peer reviewers in the community, each of whom will have undergone non-discipline specific training in the purposes and norms of external peer review. Another second generation issue has been the potential for conflict of interest, particularly in cases involving payment (such as consultant contracts) and non-disclosure agreements, which can inhibit objective peer review. At Western Carolina University, for example, some departments have opted to allow scholarship that results from paid service to be recognized, while others have not.

In the end, the fit between traditional peer review, the Boyer model, and non-traditional scholarship is still an awkward one. The experiences of Western Carolina University suggest, on the other hand, that practical experience in implementing new guidelines can lend new insights

into even the most revered of processes. While no department at Western Carolina University suggested the possibility of open peer review, which is largely done post-publication by publically-identified reviewers and authors, the process does seem to be gaining ground in the publishing world and other institutions may wish to consider it. New forms of scholarship are straining the limits of peer review, but the same strain is also pushing academics to throw off their own blinders, so to speak, and critically examine the basis and rationale for peer review and to ask new and interesting questions about evaluating the quality and rigor of scholarly work.

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