This chapter describes the findings from a national survey of community college faculty. With the lens of Boyer’s Domains of Scholarship applied to these findings, a more fine-grained and accurate assessment of the engagement of community college faculty members in scholarship emerges.

Community College Faculty Engagement in Boyer’s Domains of Scholarship

John M. Braxton, Dawn Lyken-Segosebe

Teaching constitutes the primary role of faculty members in community colleges. Teaching occupies 85% of the typical community college faculty member’s time (Rosser & Townsend, 2006). Moreover, research on faculty publication productivity suggests that community college faculty members publish very infrequently. More specifically, data from the 2004 National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF:04) indicates that community college faculty members have published an average of less than one article in both refereed and nonrefereed journals during the past 2 years (Rosser & Townsend, 2006). Moreover, nearly 70% of community college faculty reported having no publications during a 2-year period (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). These rates provide only a general measure of article production and may produce an inaccurate indicator of the level of community college faculty members’ participation in research and scholarship. However, a different picture of the engagement in scholarship by community college faculty members might emerge through the use of the lens of Boyer’s perspective on scholarship encapsulated in his 1990 volume Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate.

Boyer offers two perspectives that might produce a different picture of the engagement of community college faculty members in research and scholarship. One perspective centers on his call to broaden the definition of scholarship beyond the predominant emphasis on the scholarship of discovery to include the scholarships of application, integration, and teaching (Boyer, 1990).
According to Boyer (1990), the scholarship of application involves the application of disciplinary knowledge and skill to help address important societal and institutional problems, whereas the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake constitutes the aim of the scholarship of discovery. The testing and generation of theory is also an essential facet of the scholarship of discovery. The scholarship of integration requires scholars who give meaning to isolated facts, illuminate data in a revealing way, make connections across the discipline, and synthesize the knowledge of the discipline. Rice (1991) clarifies that domain of scholarship by asserting “scholars are needed with a capacity to synthesize, to look for new relationships between the parts and the whole, to relate the past and future to the present, and to ferret out patterns of meaning that cannot be seen through traditional disciplinary lenses” (p. 13). The development and improvement of pedagogical practice constitutes the goal of the scholarship of teaching (Braxton, Luckey, & Helland, 2002).

Of these four domains of scholarship, Boyer (1990, pp. 60–61) viewed engagement in the scholarship of application and the scholarship of teaching as befitting community college faculty members. Thus, we might expect that community college faculty engagement may vary across these four domains of scholarship, a variation obscured by the use of a general measure of article production. Boyer also argued for flexibility in what counts as scholarship. He argued for the use of scholarly forms distinct from journal articles, book chapters, and books in the assessment of faculty scholarship (Boyer, 1990). Thus, he was arguing for the use of other forms of writing or documented evidence of scholarship. Shulman and Hutchings (1998) contend that an unpublished outcome of scholarship may be designated as scholarship if it meets three necessary characteristics: (a) it must be publicly observable, (b) it must be amenable to critical appraisal, and (c) it must be in a form that permits its exchange and use by other members of a scholarly community. By expanding the definition of what counts as scholarship to include unpublished, but publicly observable, outcomes of scholarship, a different picture of the level of community college faculty member engagement in research and scholarship may emerge.

Although research on the extent of faculty engagement in each of Boyer’s four domains of scholarship has been conducted in 4-year colleges and universities (Braxton et al., 2002), little or no research has transpired on the engagement of community college faculty members in each of Boyer’s four domains of scholarship. As a consequence, the findings we describe in this chapter address this lack of research by attending to the following four questions.

**Question One:** Does the proportion of community college faculty members having no publications during the past 3 years vary across the four domains of scholarship delineated by Boyer? As stated previously, nearly 70% of community college faculty members registered no publications
during a 2-year period. This first question concentrates on whether the proportion of community college faculty members’ engagement in each of the four domains of scholarship resembles this general level of publication productivity, or reference point, for community college faculty members.

**Question Two:** Do community college faculty members with a doctoral degree differ in their level of engagement in the four domains of scholarship from their colleagues who do not have a doctoral degree? Given the thrust of the doctoral socialization process on the acquisitions of attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills of research (Austin & Wulff, 2004), we might expect that community college faculty members holding a doctoral degree would exhibit a higher degree of engagement in each of the four domains of scholarship than their non-doctoral-degree-holding faculty counterparts.

**Question Three:** Do community college faculty members’ levels of engagement in the four domains of scholarship vary by their academic rank? In his review of literature on the correlates of faculty publication productivity, Creswell (1985) noted a relationship between academic rank and faculty publication productivity.

**Question Four:** Do community college faculty members’ levels of engagement in the four domains of scholarship vary across different academic disciplines? From their review of research on disciplinary differences, Braxton and Hargens (1996) concluded that the differences among academic disciplines are “profound and extensive.” More specifically, the level of paradigmatic development of an academic discipline affects teaching and research activities. Moreover, Braxton, Luckey, and Helland (2002) found discipline differences in 4-year college and university faculty engagement in two of the four domains of scholarship described by Boyer (1990): the scholarship of application and the scholarship of teaching.

We describe the methods and statistical analyses we used to address these four questions in the appendix to this volume. A description of the variables used to address these questions is available from the first author. In addition, readers interested in the professional behaviors pertinent to publications and unpublished outcomes of scholarship indicative of the four domains of scholarship described by Boyer (1990) should consult “Appendix B: The Inventory of Scholarship” in Braxton, Luckey, and Helland’s (2002) volume *Institutionalizing a Broader View of Scholarship Through Boyer’s Four Domains*.

**Findings**

We organized the presentation of our findings by the four research questions.

**Question One:** Does the proportion of community college faculty members having no publications during the past 3 years vary across the four
domains of scholarship delineated by Boyer? In attending to this question, we used the previously delineated reference point of 70% of community college faculty members registering no publications during a 2-year period. This reference point refers to a general, undifferentiated measure of 2-year publication productivity. Table A.1 in the appendix displays these various percentages presented in response to this first research question.

We learned that the percentage of community college faculty members who report no publications during the past 3 years exceeds this point of reference for publications reflecting the scholarship of application (87.4%), discovery (80.6%), and teaching (86.2%). Examples of publications reflective of the scholarship of application include a refereed journal article reporting findings of research designed to solve a practical problem and an article that applies new disciplinary knowledge to a practical problem. A refereed journal article reporting findings of research designed to gain new knowledge constitutes an example of a discovery-oriented publication. Examples of publications directed toward the scholarship of teaching include the use of a new instructional method and reporting a new teaching approach developed by the individual faculty member.

However, the percentage of community college faculty members registering no publications associated with the scholarship of integration falls considerably below this reference point given that 55.3% of community college faculty members report having no publications reflective of this domain of scholarship. Moreover, more than two fifths (43.7%) of community college faculty members have published one to two times within this domain. Examples of publications associated with the scholarship of integration embrace a review of literature on a disciplinary topic and a review essay of two or more books on similar topics.

We obtain a different picture of the level of engagement in research and scholarship by full-time community college faculty members when we consider the proportion of such faculty members who report no unpublished outcomes of scholarship reflective of the scholarships of application (24.8%), integration (38.8%), and teaching (0.6%). Put another way, the majority of community college faculty members report they have produced one to two times unpublished outcomes of scholarship associated with the domains of application (70.7%) and of integration (57.1%). Moreover, more than half (51.3%) of community college faculty members report that they have produced three to five times forms of unpublished outcomes of scholarship associated with the scholarship of teaching. Conducting a study for a local governmental organization and conducting a study to help solve a community problem provide examples of unpublished outcomes of scholarship reflective of the scholarships of application. Giving a public lecture on a current topic in your discipline to a local high school class and giving a public talk on a current topic in your discipline on a local radio station offer examples of unpublished outcomes of scholarship associated
with the scholarship of integration. Examples of unpublished outcomes of scholarship associated with the scholarship of teaching consist of making a presentation to colleagues about new instructional techniques and developing examples, materials, class exercises, or assignments that help students to learn difficult course concepts.

**Question Two**: Do community college faculty members with a doctoral degree differ in their level of engagement in the four domains of scholarship from their colleagues who do not have a doctoral degree? As we previously posited the thrust of the doctoral socialization process centers on the acquisition of attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills of research (Austin & Wulff, 2004). Accordingly, we might expect that community college faculty members holding a doctoral degree would exhibit a higher degree of engagement in each of the four domains of scholarship than their non-doctoral-degree-holding faculty counterparts. However, we learned those community college faculty holding a doctoral degree differ little from their non-doctoral-degree-holding faculty colleagues on their level of engagement in each of the seven dependent variables. A table reporting the results of the statistical tests made to address this question is available upon request from the first author.

**Question Three**: Do community college faculty members’ levels of engagement in the four domains of scholarship vary by their academic rank? The answer to this question is no, as we found that the academic rank of community college faculty members makes little or no difference in their level of engagement across the four domains of scholarship using both publications and unpublished, but publicly observable, outcomes as indices of engagement. A table displaying the results of the statistical tests made to address this question is available from the first author.

**Question Four**: Do community college faculty members’ levels of engagement in the four domains of scholarship vary across different academic disciplines? We learned the academic discipline of the community college faculty member makes little or no difference in their level of performance of publications reflective of the scholarship of discovery and the scholarship of teaching. However, academic discipline does matter in level of publications oriented toward the scholarship of application and the scholarship of integration. More specifically, community college faculty members who are historians and sociologists tend to exhibit higher levels of publications reflective of the scholarship of application than do their colleagues in biology. Academic sociologists in community colleges also tend to produce a higher level of publications oriented toward the scholarship of integration than do their colleagues in chemistry. Moreover, academic historians and sociologists in community colleges also tend to enact more unpublished outcomes directed toward the scholarship of integration than their counterparts in biology and chemistry. Table A.2 of the appendix provides the supporting results of the statistical analyses conducted.
Conclusions and Implications for Practice

We present the following two conclusions that we derive from the configuration of findings of this study. First, the two perspectives on scholarship advanced by Boyer (1990) provide a more fine-grained and accurate assessment of the engagement of community college faculty members in scholarship. Our findings indicate that the use of a general measure of article publication productivity provides an inaccurate picture of the publication productivity of community college faculty members. Although the percentage of community college faculty members who report no publications associated with the scholarships of application, discovery, and teaching during the past 3 years exceeds the previously described reference point of 70%, the percentage of community college faculty members registering no publications associated with the scholarship of integration falls considerably below this point of reference. Moreover, more than two fifths of community college faculty members have published one to two times within this domain within the past 3 years. Thus, community college faculty members exhibit a level of engagement in the scholarship of integration that would go unidentified without the application of the lens of Boyer’s four domains of scholarship to assess research and scholarship performance.

Our findings also indicate that the use of publications as the indicator of research and scholarship underestimates the level of full-time community college faculty members’ level of engagement in scholarship of application and teaching. As previously indicated, Boyer (1990) argued for use of other forms of writing or documented evidence of scholarship distinct from journal articles, book chapters, and books to assess faculty scholarship (Boyer, 1990). With the use of unpublished outcomes of scholarship as an indicator of their engagement, we conclude that full-time community college faculty members exhibit greater levels of engagement in the scholarship of application and teaching than suggested by the use of publications within these domains. Thus, we conclude that publications within the four domains of scholarship and unpublished outcomes of scholarship associated with Boyer’s domains as used in this study provide a more complete and accurate picture of the level of engagement in scholarship by full-time community college faculty members.

The second conclusion takes the following form. As previously discussed, many scholars view the professional identity of community college faculty members as uncertain. Scholars such as Palmer (1992) and Vaughan (1988) view scholarship as a basis for the forging of a professional identity for community college faculty members. We conclude that the pursuit of application-, integration-, and teaching-oriented scholarship offers a starting point for development of the professional identity of full-time community college faculty members. For faculty in history and sociology, the shaping of an identity grounded in the scholarship of application and integration looms more likely than for faculty in biology and chemistry. An
identity rooted in the scholarship of teaching seems particularly promising given that the scholarship of teaching seeks to develop and refine pedagogical practice (Braxton et al., 2002). As such, the scholarship of teaching resonates with the scholastic and the classroom research frames of Palmer’s (1992) frames of reference for the professional identity of community college faculty members.

From these two conclusions, we offer three implications for practice. First, future measurements of the engagement of full-time community college faculty members in scholarship should use the two types of indicators used in this study: publications reflecting each of the four domains of scholarship delineated by Boyer and unpublished, publicly observable outcomes of scholarship reflective of Boyer’s domains. To do so provides a fuller picture of the engagement in scholarship by full-time community college faculty members.

Second, we boldly suggest that community colleges should begin discussions about including the pursuit of the scholarship of application, integration, and teaching by full-time faculty members into their institutional missions. Acknowledgment of scholarship as part of the mission of the community college would accelerate the development of the professional identity of full-time community college faculty members, an identity ingrained in the pursuit of the scholarships of application, integration, and teaching. Such an inclusion, however, should not come at the expense of teaching as the core mission of the community college. Moreover, such an addition would also not place faculty at a disadvantage because of their highest earned degree or their academic rank given our findings regarding research questions two and three.

Third, the academic reward structure—reappointments, tenure, promotion, and annual salary adjustments—of those community colleges that include scholarship in their institutional missions need to give some weight to those faculty members who elect to engage in scholarship associated with the domains of application, integration, and teaching. The specific forms of scholarship displayed in Table A.1 provide a foundation for such assessments. In particular, we stress the importance of encouraging faculty to submit for review their unpublished outcomes of scholarship that meet Shulman and Hutchings’s (1998) three necessary characteristics for designating an outcome as scholarship, which we previously described. Accordingly, their work should be in the form of audio- and videotaped presentations, papers, reports, and websites so as to meet these three criteria (Braxton & Del Favero, 2002).

Closing Thought

In their important volume Community College Faculty: Overlooked and Undervalued, Townsend and Twombly (2007) contend that “scholars and community college administrators should focus attention on sharpening the role
of community college faculty members around which their professional identity is built and then on how new faculty members are socialized to this professional identity” (p. 117). We assert that the implementation of the three implications for practice would contribute to the sharpening of the professional identity of community college faculty members, an identity that includes engagement in scholarship.

References


John M. Braxton is a professor of education in the Higher Education Leadership and Policy Program at Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Dawn Lyken-Segosebe received her PhD in leadership and policy studies from Vanderbilt University.