

College Teaching as Meta-Profession: Reconceptualizing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Presented at the 9th Annual AAHE Conference on Faculty Roles and Rewards
Tampa, Florida, February 1-4, 2001

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College teaching is conceptualized as a meta-profession that builds upon and extends beyond content expertise to include expertise in inducing and assessing student learning as well as participating in and/or managing goal-oriented processes and organizations.

1. All college faculty are drawn from a pool of professionals prepared to practice and/or conduct research in a specific content area. When an individual is hired as a faculty member for the first time they come to the position with what may be called their *base profession's* skills and knowledge including:
 - Content Expertise
 - Practice and/or Clinical Skills
 - Research Techniques appropriate to their field
 - Strategies for Keeping Current in their field
2. This set of skills, techniques and knowledge which characterize a faculty member's *base profession* has traditionally been assumed to be sufficient to enable the individual to be an effective teacher. Current selection and hiring processes for college and university faculty positions are predicated on this assumption. Research in the field of the evaluation of faculty teaching performance has shown this assumption to be incorrect.
3. Although the skills and knowledge associated with a faculty member's *base profession* are necessary for effective college teaching, they are *insufficient*. In its full professional expression college teaching has been found to require at least three different, though related, professional dimensions:
 - Base profession* Skills and Knowledge (especially Content Expertise)
 - Instructional Design Skills and Knowledge
 - Instructional Delivery Skills and Knowledge
4. That is, faculty must, of course, be expert in the field which they are teaching. However, the act of practicing one's *base profession*, whether it be architecture, biochemistry, dentistry, engineering, etc., is substantially different than that of interacting with learners in such a way that they, too, gain the skills, knowledge, and practice skills of that profession.
5. Faculty must be able to design and deliver a set of experiences to the learner such that, if the learner engages the experiences, there is a high probability learning will occur. In addition, the faculty member must validly and reliably assess the learner's progress so as to both enhance the learning process and, ultimately, certify that learning has in fact occurred.
6. The areas of Instructional Design and Instructional Delivery are professional endeavors in and of themselves (doctorates are offered in both areas). Thus, at least three different arenas of professional performance are required of the college teacher.
7. College teaching is thus conceptualized as a *meta-profession*. That is, a profession that is built upon the foundation of another (*base*) profession.

8. Due to the foundational principle of faculty governance in academe, the larger role of college faculty members also involves the additional professional dimension of *Leadership*. That is, in addition to the teaching role, faculty must possess skills and knowledge which enable them to *effectively participate in, and/or manage, goal-oriented, groups or organizations whose areas of endeavor may or may not be content-specific*.
9. The reconceptualization of the professoriate as meta-professionals significantly affects how faculty and administrators approach the role and responsibilities of the professoriate.
10. *The professoriate is thus conceptualized not as a confederation of content-specific professional groups, but as broad, unified set of meta-professionals whose practice extends beyond the application of their specific content expertise to the broader arena of inducing learning in others and participating and managing a self-governed, goal-oriented social organization. The meta-profession encompasses the professional areas of:**
 - Base Profession (content expertise, etc.)*
 - Instructional Design (including assessment)*
 - Instructional Delivery (including all forms of technology)*
 - Leadership (including group process, management, etc.)*

* See the last page of this handout for an expanded, though not complete, description of the skills and knowledge involved in the dimensions beyond the *base profession*.

11. The reconceptualization of a faculty member as a meta-professional provides insights for preparing, selecting, hiring, and rewarding faculty within the higher education enterprise. Areas affected include:
 - the selection and hiring of new faculty
 - the evaluation of current faculty
 - the characteristics of faculty development programs
 - promotion and tenure policies and procedures
 - impact on college curricula (all fields)

Questions to consider:

- I. How would you amend or revise the definition of the meta-profession of college teaching as presented?
- II. What are the advantages and strengths of considering college teaching as a meta-profession?
- III. How would you change your activities as a teacher if college teaching was formally defined as, and considered, a meta-profession?
- IV. Should graduate curricula in all fields include a core set of courses in *instructional design, instructional delivery, and leadership*?
- V. Should a new 'teaching certificate' be established for college teaching to ensure that all college teachers have the required expertise in instructional delivery and instructional design as well as in their content field?
- VI. Should faculty with such 'teaching certificates' or other evidence of expertise in instructional delivery and instructional design receive special (higher) rates of pay?

Brief Overview of Additional Professional Skills Beyond the Base Profession

Instructional Design Skills:

Those technical skills in designing, sequencing, and presenting experiences which induce learning; and...those skills in developing and using tools and procedures for assessing student learning (i.e. testing and grading).

- Test construction and analysis
- Questionnaire construction and analysis
- Task analysis skills
- Psychology of learning
- Instructional systems design techniques
- Preparing learning objectives
- Determining appropriate delivery technique
- Designing instructional materials for delivery by all forms of technology
- Assessing student learning
- Using assessment data for formative and summative purposes
- Statistics of grading (weighting scores, criterion vs normative grades)

Instructional Delivery Skills:

Those human interactive skills which promote or facilitate learning including the ability to motivate students, generate enthusiasm and communicate effectively in all forms of instructional environments.

- Oral presentation skills
 - Large lecture
 - Standard classroom
 - Small seminar or discussion group
 - Group facilitation

- Written communication skills

- Skills in the use of presentation and delivery technology including
 - Overhead projectors
 - Video projectors
 - Video streaming
 - Interactive Video
 - Elmo (personal video presenters)
 - VCR's
 - Slide Projectors
 - Audio conferencing devices
 - Computers
 - Internet

Leadership Skills:

Those skills in participating in and/or managing groups to achieve a specific goal, objective, or product.

- Group Process
- Conflict Management
- Goal Setting
- Strategic Planning
- Sources of Power
- Networking