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ASHE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Faculty Work: Making Our Research Matter—More

Linda K. Johnsrud

Thank you for being here this afternoon. It is an honor to have this opportunity to address my higher education colleagues.

For much of my academic career, I studied faculty—the quality of their worklives, the barriers they experience, their retention, and satisfaction. I drew on my research and that of others to address what we called the crisis in faculty status and morale. I built upon the work of Bowen and Schuster in the mid-1980s that described faculty as dispirited, fragmented, and devalued. Research on the quality of faculty worklife has been criticized as self-serving, self-indulgent, even navel-gazing. From the vantage of a faculty member, I defended that work. Today as a senior administrator, I continue to defend the work. Why? Because I believe that faculty lives are important—important because of the work they do, the work that discovers, preserves, transmits, and applies knowledge, and the work that transforms individual lives and improves the quality of life of the entire society. Faculty members doing quality academic work are critical to quality higher education.

I want to make four observations today. First I will argue that the current attack on higher education is essentially an attack on how we, members of the academy, define and judge quality. Second, I want to reflect with you

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on my own socialization as a faculty member, how I learned to define quality—the confessions of a researcher turned policymaker. Third, I will suggest that those of us who study higher education have a particular obligation to make our work relevant to the issues of the day—to the policy arena that is shaping the future of higher education, the policy arena that may redefine quality. And finally, I want to make a few recommendations for how we, as faculty who study higher education and as a professional association, might make a difference.

We know that faculty work is under attack. As a profession, we simply do not enjoy the public respect and trust that we did in the past. As the National Commission on the Future of Higher Education held its hearings across the country this year, there was a good deal of criticism of higher education, and the public did not jump to our defense. The public values higher education but is, nonetheless, critical—and by public, I am not just talking about the federal government. I mean executive and legislative branches of state governments, leaders in business and industry, parents, and consumers. They are disenchanted with education in general. They are even more concerned about K–12, but they hold us at least partially responsible for the problems of K–12. Even strong supporters of higher education want to know why undergraduates are so often ill served, why faculty teach so few hours per week, why research seems incapable of providing solutions to social problems. The quality of our work is being questioned. There are too many stories from employers about college graduates who are not articulate, who cannot write or think critically. There are too many stories of faculty who neglect teaching in favor of their research—and this is seen as self-serving. Increasingly, faculty members are seen as more interested in pursuing consulting and grants off campus than they are in meeting their responsibilities on campus. Fundamentally, the public wants to know what public higher education is doing with taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. In current reports, it is clear that the public continues to value higher education, but they are angry at the rising cost, and many believe a better job could be done with fewer resources. Some are beginning to question whether the cost is worth the benefit.

Even more serious is the questioning by the public of our integrity and ability to manage our own affairs. Reports of research misconduct, the student loan scandal, athletic compliance issues, fraud, and misappropriated funds undermine the integrity of the academy. We in the academy know that such conduct is the result of a tiny minority, but it casts a long shadow.

And of course, mistrust breeds increased attention, increased investigation, and the specter of increased controls. The demands for reform of higher education are coming from all sides. Our external stakeholders are becoming more aggressive about our productivity. On the national level, in

a direct response to the U.S. Department of Education and its call for more accountability, our regional accreditors are pushing us to provide evidence of educational effectiveness and student learning outcomes. We are being asked to document the quality of our work.

Take, for example, the final report of what has come to be called the Spellings Commission. It calls for improving accessibility, affordability, and accountability. In the 2006 Action Plan (Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006), the secretary comments on each of these:

Accessibility: “There are far too many Americans who want to go to college but cannot—because they’re either not prepared or cannot afford it.”

Affordability: “There is little to no information on why costs are so high and what we’re getting in return.”

Accountability: “No current ranking system of colleges and universities directly measures the most critical point—student performance and learning.” (pp. 1–2)

Most of us would probably concur in the importance of access, affordability, and accountability, but the debate centers on the appropriate role of the federal government in addressing these concerns which have assumed political overtones. For example, some have suggested that these conclusions are partisan and that a change in the White House will at least diffuse the attack. Note, however, that presidential candidate Hillary Clinton calls for colleges and universities to publish not only the four-year *and* six-year graduation rates but also information on graduates’ earnings and field of employment. Candidates for U.S. president realize that the public is concerned about the access and affordability of higher education, and they feel compelled to provide solutions—solutions intended to hold us accountable for the quality of our work.

In addition to the federal level, pressure for change is also exerted on the state level as alarm grows regarding the productivity of higher education. In more than half of the states, legislatures have demanded faculty workload studies. In many states, there is a push to tie our performance on specific indicators like retention and graduation rates to our funding. In fall 2006, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) issued a report, *Transforming Higher Education: National Imperative—State Responsibility*. This report states that “there is a crisis in American higher education” (NCSL, 2006, p. 1).

- The American system is no longer the best in the world. Other countries outrank and outperform us.
- At the same time, tuition and fees are increasing rapidly, and the quality of the educational experience is not keeping pace.

- The cost of attending college has increased significantly. . . . Student financial assistance has not kept pace. Increasingly, lower income students are being priced out of college. (p. 1)

The report calls upon state legislators to be at the “center of a nationwide movement to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current system, determine a public agenda for higher education for the future, set clear goals for the state and higher education, and hold institutions accountable” (p. 1). This bears repeating: State legislators are being told by their peers that they must look more closely at the performance of higher education.

And at the state level, it is not just legislators calling for reform. *Governors* are being told that they must play a more active role. The most recent publication from the National Governors Association (2007) as part of the Innovation America initiative is titled *A Compact for Postsecondary Education*. Their focus “is on how states can better align postsecondary education with their economic needs, which will position them to compete in the global economy by producing a highly-skilled workforce and by unleashing postsecondary education institutions’ power to innovate” (p. 1). The number one recommendation to governors is to develop an explicit state agenda for higher education—that is, to convene political, business, and educational leaders to set explicit state goals and organize themselves to achieve them. Their paper lists the national challenges already mentioned: the United States’ decreasing international competitiveness, the decreasing educational attainment in the United States, our inability to supply workers with the skills and competencies needed by employers, our low retention and graduation rates. Our completion rates are dismal. We used to defend our completion rates relative to other countries by pointing to our high access. Now other countries have increased access *and* completion. The governors’ call for compacts does a better job than most in recognizing the complexities of these issues and the challenge to higher education in responding. Nonetheless, presidents and chancellors of higher education systems are being encouraged to forge compacts with their states—compacts that commit to holding campuses accountable for meeting specific goals to address a state’s major economic challenges in exchange for a state’s commitment to provide flexibility and to stabilize funding. The authors state simply, “Urgent action is needed” (p. 3).

Even closer to home, in June 2007 at our ASHE/Lumina Fellows conference, Pat Callan of the National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education and senior advisor to the Spellings commission, said flatly: “Higher education is under-performing.” And he went on to make the point that the nation’s need for increased educational attainment is critical. Just as it has been said that war is too important to leave to the generals, he suggested that higher education may be too important to leave to the providers.

I am not going to detail the list of current criticisms any further; I know that those of you who study higher education are particularly well versed in the challenges we face. I am *most* interested in our response.

In 2001, Marty Finkelstein referred to what he called the faculty's fall from grace (2001, p. 323). In his chapter in the *Defense of American Higher Education*, he eloquently disputed the criticisms of the faculty and essentially argued that faculty members are getting a bum rap. He used empirical evidence to argue that teaching is not being ignored, that faculty work hard and are not paid as well as their professional peers, and that tenure has been a positive influence on faculty performance and hence has served the national interest. He argued that the public doesn't understand the historical and current mandate of research university faculty to conduct research as well as to teach undergraduates. I took comfort in reading Marty's defense of the academic profession, but it is clear that the governors and legislators calling for reform today are not convinced. They are fixated on outcomes. We can argue that their perspectives are overly simplistic. We can argue that there are forces at work—fiscal, social, global, and demographic—that are affecting academic enterprise in complex and interactive ways. The concerns about the role of higher education and the nation's future go way beyond faculty work in some ways and, in others, sit squarely on our shoulders. So how do we respond? What responsibility do we have as a profession in responding to the changing conditions of faculty work?

This is where I must confess that my orientation has changed. What I used to believe was true has been challenged by where I now sit in the academy. My past response to the question of faculty responsibility was to move the discussion to the level of the individual faculty member. I asked what my legacy would be to my profession. What would I leave behind when I retired or died? I argued that what will remain is quality work—either the research, the new knowledge we have contributed to our discipline, or the students who have gained from their work with us. I was and am still passionate about our commitment to quality work. But in today's context, I look back and realize that in all my zeal for quality, I never mentioned relevance. I never mentioned conducting research that matters. Not surprisingly, I never addressed how to measure quality. I didn't have to; I believed that I shared with my peers an agreed-upon measure for quality work—publication in top-tier journals.

In thinking back on my own socialization as a faculty member, I am struck by how internally focused it was. I remember being introduced to the notion that there were faculty who were local and those who were cosmopolitan. I know that my socialization instilled in me the firm belief that cosmopolitan was better, that being connected to your disciplinary community on a national or international stage was to be prized, that service to your home institution—being local—was secondary. Service to the state or the nation

wasn't even mentioned. In fact, after I accepted my faculty job at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, I remember distinctly one of my professors at Ohio State commenting to me, "Remember, they are just providing you with an office, a desk, and a telephone; you can do your work anyplace." Yes, it is the case that I can do my work anyplace, but do I have some obligation to those who pay my salary? Do I have an obligation to address the issues that are relevant to the state or the state's policymakers or the state's taxpayers?

What is the message we send as we socialize new faculty? Public colleges and universities educate 80% of the nation's college students. States spend roughly \$70 billion a year on higher education, more than any other level of government. And we send the message that where we sit—who pays our salary—is irrelevant to the work we do? We have the luxury of choosing the focus of our scholarship, the ultimate in academic freedom; but does that freedom not come with some measure of responsibility to those who support that work? I am sure that this question comes up for me today because I am an administrator. I didn't have these doubts about my role when I was a faculty member.

I grew up in ASHE; annually the goal was to get a proposal accepted, present it, revise it, and get it out for publication in one of the top academic journals. ASHE as an academic community takes the socialization of graduate students seriously; we cultivate the membership and participation of graduate students; we encourage newcomers to get involved and seek the help of their more senior colleagues; we conduct sessions on how to get published and how to succeed in an academic career. I am a product of this socialization, and I am grateful for it has served me well as an academic.

But I have to ask whether my contributions have served any ends other than ensuring my tenure and promotion. I do believe that my work with students is a legacy that extends beyond my own benefit, but have I merely turned out more doctorates trained to go after tenure and promotion? That is certainly a measure of the quality of my work and theirs, but is it enough? And yes, I believe that my research and writing has contributed to a body of inquiry on faculty and academic work. My interests have ranged from administrative to faculty careers, from mobility to mentoring, from the particular experiences of women and ethnic/racial minority faculty to issues of satisfaction, morale, and retention of all faculty. *My work has contributed to our understanding.* How many times have I written that in the concluding paragraph of an article? But have the results of my work led to any concrete actions? Or informed any change in policy or practice?

It is probably clear why this has become an issue for me now. My current job in the University of Hawai'i system planning and policy office calls for me to contribute to the public agenda for higher education in the state of Hawai'i. It is my job to bring data and research to bear on the tough questions facing the state. My office has multiple roles: we set tuition rates, es-

establish financial aid policy, determine where in the state we need to expand education and training services, and shape the direction of academic policy for the state's 10 campuses in the public system. It is my job to answer the question: What does the state of Hawai'i need from public higher education? As I work to address that question, what literature do I draw on to help me better frame a response? Which journals will contribute to my thinking? Which associations focus on such issues?

I was selected for my job, in part at least, because of my scholarly background in higher education. The UH president who hired me, like all good presidents, brags about his administrative team and never fails to note that his vice president for academic planning and policy is president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. I am, of course, pleased that he remembers; but secretly, I have to ask: How relevant is my scholarly work to the questions I am trying to answer in my current job in academic planning and policy? My work was valued by ASHE; my work was probably the reason I was elected president. But does it matter outside of our professional arena? The relevance of my work as a faculty member hardly matters at this point, but I would like to pose the question for ASHE members: How relevant is our collective work to the critical questions of the day? Estela Mara Bensimon, immediate past president of ASHE, asked a related question at our summer board meeting. She asked why ASHE, as a scholarly professional association, is never asked to comment on the critical issues of the day. Individual members are asked but not our association.

Those questions bring me to my third observation, and that is what I've come to see as the obligation of those of us who study higher education. In 1995, Patrick Terenzini (1996) delivered the ASHE Presidential Address. In that talk, he described the gulf that exists between higher education research and the worlds of policy and practice. He cites George Keller, in an article in the 1985 issue of *Change*, who said: "It's peculiar but it's a fact: hardly anyone in higher education pays attention to the research and scholarship about higher education" (p. 7). Keller goes on to contend that most of the research on higher education is written for other researchers rather than for "those who must act" (p. 8). Dr. Terenzini notes that he is the third ASHE president in six years to urge higher education researchers to become more involved in policy-relevant research. He also offers an explanation for why we don't. He argues that we have forgotten our roots: "Higher education as a field of study (and ASHE as an organization) developed out of the *application* [emphasis mine] of certain of the social sciences to higher education problems" (p. 7). But we have shifted our thinking. We have come to think of the study of higher education as one of the social science disciplines. Terenzini argues that shift has moved us from our applied, action-oriented roots toward more traditional academic scholarship. He states:

We may have underestimated the power of the disciplines to control and focus scholarly attention. The conception of higher education as a discipline requires the rigorous application of research designs and analytical methods that are widely accepted in the discipline. The concern with theory and fidelity to a set of methods (whether quantitative or qualitative), in turn, leads to an examination of narrower, more precisely defined topics and questions. It also promotes a tighter, more specialized language. The cumulative effect of these tendencies is the placement of one's work within an established discourse among a community of like-minded scholars with training and interests similar to one's own. Such specialization and narrowness, however, also reduce or eliminate access to that work by practitioners and policymakers who may be able to apply it to the solution of educational problems. (p. 7)

If his analysis is accurate, where does that leave us as a profession? We do work that can't be easily applied to the solution of educational problems. Are we willing to settle for high-quality work that doesn't matter to anyone but us? And then only when we read each other's work to do literature reviews? I am not so naive as to think we are willing to give up the hard-won status of disciplinary integrity, but we must find ways to meet our standards of quality and to be relevant.

To be fair, we have made progress since 1995. According to the history on our website, at the 2000 ASHE conference in Sacramento, California, a small coordinating group of ASHE members launched the inaugural Forum on Public Policy in Higher Education, drawing more than 40 proposals for refereed review and attracting more than 70 participants. In October 2002, the ASHE Board formally recognized the Council on Public Policy in Higher Education, and today the chair sits *ex officio* on the board.

Moreover, I do not want to suggest that we don't have scholars contributing to the policy arena. We do. Don Hossler, Laura Perna, Michael McClendon, Carol Everly-Floyd, Don Heller, James Hearn, Scott Thomas, Patty Yeager, and William Zumeta come immediately to mind.

But we have a way to go. When it was first noted that ASHE was holding its annual meeting in Kentucky, more than one member of ASHE looked bored and sighed that the site selection could be more appealing. There was certainly a bit of coastal bias in this reaction; but more to the point, these faculty members had no idea what is going on in Kentucky in public higher education. This state has been a front runner in setting a public agenda, involving all of the stakeholders, and working toward common goals that will benefit the quality of life for Kentuckians. Kentucky is seen as a public policy model for other states attempting to do the same thing.

Why don't members of ASHE know about Kentucky? Believe me, all of those involved in policy know about Kentucky's efforts. Maybe there is no reason for ASHE members at large to know why having an ASHE meeting in Kentucky is particularly timely and appropriate for those of us who study

higher education—it's a state initiative, after all—but how much do we know about what is happening in our own states? How many of us know what the public agenda for higher education is in our state?

For that matter, what *is* a state public agenda for higher education? Earlier I said that state legislators are calling for each state to establish a public agenda for higher education and that governors are calling for compacts with higher education to hold us accountable for addressing the public agenda. These efforts have enormous implications for faculty worklives, yet faculty at large know little of what is going on; and those of us who study higher education, as a group, don't seem to know much more. Even more importantly for us, public agendas are well received by almost all constituencies everywhere except among faculty—and particularly those at research universities and the arts and science faculty.

These faculty members have reason to be suspicious of public agendas; the emphasis tends to be on the professions, career-related majors, and applied research. Faculty members have become accustomed to strategic plans that reflect broad-based consensus about how we on our campuses are to reach our mission. Consensus means that faculty members have played a significant role in setting the agenda for their campus. A strategic plan tends to be a statement about what the faculty wants; a public agenda is a statement of what the state needs.

There is cause for caution in letting a public agenda dictate a campus's direction. Many of our mission statements and strategic plans speak to broad social goals and longstanding public purposes. Many public agendas speak to critical, short-term workforce needs and longer term economic development and priorities. As Dennis Jones, president of NCHEMS, will point out on Saturday, we need to increase the educational capital of the nation, and we will have to increase our productivity to do so (Jones, 2007). We maintain that we are concerned with the quality of what we do, and that goal is hard to find in the call for higher efficiencies and higher productivity. I believe that, at the campus level, the toughest pill to swallow is that the public interest is more than the sum of institutional interests. Faculty members want to add those positions, programs, or services that will increase their competitiveness, that will increase the quality of what they offer.

There is a real mismatch between how we in higher education define and measure quality and what is being called for in most public agendas. Higher education has long defined quality for itself; we hold peer review sacred. Our decisions in regard to tenure, promotion, and publication are all internal matters; they are all decisions we make about the quality of each other's work. There are few professions so closed, so impervious to external review. Our notion of external review extends only to our peers; for example, we value accrediting teams because the members are our peers; we accept reviews of our manuscripts—begrudgingly—because they come from our peers; we

value external letters of support for tenure and promotion because they are written by our national disciplinary peers. Can we really argue that our peers bring an external perception to their reviews? External to what? Certainly not external to higher education. We may not continue to get this deference; our definition of quality needs to expand to serve the public interest. If we want to protect our internal processes of peer review, we must acknowledge the public's right to demand quality outcomes.

Let's take another example. The majority of our institutions, and the majority of faculty members, pay some amount of attention to the rankings in the *U.S. News and World Report*. We may criticize the rankings, but we read them. What do these rankings reward? The lower your student/faculty ratios, the smaller your class size, the more selective your admissions standards, the higher your ranking. Taken together, these measures increase costs and reduce access. What is it that most of our external stakeholders are calling for? More students educated with fewer resources. These rankings use measures of quality that run absolutely counter to increasing the educational capital of the nation. Our notion of quality is being challenged by the policymakers concerned with improving the productivity of the nation.

Quality is also at issue in this year's debates regarding accreditation. During the negotiated rule-making, the matter of quality and how to measure it revealed the fundamental difference in perspective between the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) and the higher education community. The DOE calls accreditation the "last bastion of self-regulation" (Schray, 2007). The federal government spends billions of taxpayers' dollars on higher education. The only quality assurance is accreditation—and now they are hearing from some that it is meaningless. They hear that many faculty members don't take accreditation seriously—but we won't transfer credits from non-accredited institutions; in fact, we won't even analyze the transcript or syllabus. So they ask: What is a quality institution? What are quality learning outcomes? What is good enough, and by what standard is quality judged? And finally: Is the judgment of accrediting teams—again, peer review—sufficient to ensure that we are, in fact, educating our students?

The answer from many of our constituents is, "No." As a result, the U.S. Department of Education decided that asking faculty to judge their own quality was insufficient. Our regional accreditors are now demanding evidence of student learning; our word, i.e., giving grades, is no longer good enough. The focus is no longer on the inputs (faculty credentials, volumes in the library, funding per student), but rather on the outcomes. This is a rational response from the accreditors given the pressure they feel, but it also suggests a fundamental shift in who measures quality in higher education and how it is measured.

Our logic in regard to quality plays out in our finance models as well. There is an old saw in the finance literature. How much does it cost to deliver

higher education? The answer: Depends entirely on how much we have to spend. Can you imagine the faces of legislators, when they ask about cost, and we reply, with expenditures? The more you give us, the more it costs. Why? Because we never try to do what we do more cheaply. *We equate high cost with high quality.* The more we pay for a faculty star, the more quality we believe we have bought. The smaller the class size, the higher the quality of learning. The lower the student-faculty ratio, the higher the prestige of the institution. So we spend every dime given to us and ask for more, because we believe that the more we spend, the better we are, the higher the quality. And we wonder why we are under attack, why we are accused of being cavalier with taxpayers' money.

I want to return to the matter of a public agenda. We are here in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Kentucky has established a public agenda for postsecondary education that has become a model for other states seeking to ensure high quality, affordable higher education that serves the common good and improves the quality of life of its citizens. Aims McGuinness, Senior Associate at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), says of the Kentucky initiative: "The Commonwealth is leading the nation in demonstrating how sustained attention to education reform can bring about fundamental, long-term improvement in a state's quality of life and economy" (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2005, insert). His is the external view. We have a panel of Kentucky insiders commenting on their agenda in a presidential session on Friday afternoon. I am also curious about how our ASHE colleagues from Kentucky perceive this agenda—and what role they played in its development. The agenda for Kentucky was framed with five simple, yet powerful questions:

- Are more Kentuckians ready for postsecondary education?
- Is Kentucky postsecondary education affordable for its citizens?
- Do more Kentuckians have certificates and degrees?
- Are college graduates prepared for life and work in Kentucky?
- Are Kentucky's people, communities, and economy benefiting? (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2005)

It is clear how the policymakers in Kentucky have defined quality higher education. In the theme for this conference, I suggested that these five questions reflect key areas of research and scholarship pursued by ASHE members. Issues of preparation, affordability, access, outcomes, and social benefits permeate our presentations and publications. Our research should play a powerful role in the future of higher education, but we must be addressing the right questions.

How can our research:

- Inform the public agendas for higher education set by the states?

- inform the action plans to move those agendas forward?
- Inform an understanding of the conditions required to successfully implement and sustain plans once developed?
- Inform an understanding about the relationships between education and economic development—particularly how can/does higher education foster economic development?

The challenge of these questions—the role and relevance of research—is not new, but the urgency from the states about increased performance from higher education is real. The undercurrent of the various national reports is that higher education may not be up to the task without significant reform. Traditional shared governance may well be questioned. Our research must inform these issues. Research conducted by the members of ASHE can shape priorities and policies by providing the data, interpretation, and insight needed. We have the opportunity to inform decisions that can serve the shared aims of higher education and demonstrate the relevance of our research and scholarship.

And there is another layer of needed research. What does all of this mean for faculty work? As the political and social context pushes us to focus on performance and productivity, what does this mean for traditional academic measures of quality? Schuster and Finkelstein (2006), in their recent work on *The American Faculty* provide a thoughtful analysis of the changes to academic work: changes in appointments, changes in the work itself, changes in the academic career. They examine the consequences for institutions, faculty, students, and the larger society. Similarly, in *Rethinking Faculty Work*, Gappa, Austin, and Trice (2007) explore the reality of faculty appointments today. They articulate a vision of an academic workplace that can accommodate changes and still ensure that the essential elements for faculty's best work are in place—despite the nature of their appointments. Both of these books recognize that policy decisions have a profound impact on academic work and will continue to have an impact on the future of the academy.

Which brings me back to the importance of ensuring that our research is both high quality and relevant—that it is both policy research and research that informs policy. Thirty-five years ago, Coleman (1972) argued that policy research originates in action and is fed back into action, as opposed to theory-based research that originates in the disciplines and is fed back into disciplines. In other research endeavors, researchers may have little concern about whether their results are actually used by policymakers or practitioners in resolving social problems. They tend to focus their writing on how their results contribute to the advancement of disciplinary knowledge. This is the very point Pat Terenzini made in 1995 about our field of study. In 2004 Ron Heck argued that the intent of policy research is to generate pragmatic, action-oriented recommendations for alternative ways of alleviating the problem studied.

As a community of scholars, we demonstrate by our actions that we believe policy research is worth less than more theoretically based research. I know at least one fine policy analyst who has given up on ASHE because she just can't get her work accepted for presentation. We evaluate the practical and pragmatic as lower quality than the theoretical and esoteric. I just received a "revise and resubmit" on a manuscript that a colleague and I prepared for publication. One of the reviewers suggested that we cut back on the policy implications to make room for further conceptual development of the literature. The specific comment was: "The policy implications section goes on for five pages, and while this may be helpful to administrative decision makers, this area could also be pulled back a little. By the way, . . . the literature in the front section that sets the conceptual stage for the manuscript is only 3 pages." Now I understand this comment, and I may have made it myself at one point; but today, if forced to choose, I believe it is more important to inform those decision makers than to rehash the literature.

So finally, what is it that I am recommending? I think we should consider some changes—at our annual meeting, in our own work, and in our preparation programs. First, in our own meeting. As we were putting this program together, one of the sessions I wanted to feature as a presidential session was focused on community colleges and their role in access and success. I was told that we shouldn't put community colleges in the title because ASHE members wouldn't attend. If we consider work on community colleges as peripheral, it will not be the quality it needs to be, and we will not have contributed to the discourse on a primary avenue for social mobility for millions of our citizens. Kate Shaw, chair of this year's Public Policy Forum, holds a job with similar responsibilities to mine. She is Deputy Secretary for Post-Secondary and Higher Education in the Pennsylvania Department of Education. She shared with me several topics that are critical in her state—and most others—including (a) defining "college ready" across institutions, (b) effective incentives for non-college-educated adults to enroll, how to foster high quality teacher preparation, and (d) linkages between higher education and workforce development. This is not a community college issue alone. Most of these are rarely addressed in research presented at ASHE. Policy *will* be developed to shape the delivery of education and training in the United States. The issue is whether the policy will be grounded in relevant data and high-quality research.

Similarly, we need to rethink the role of policy-oriented research in our meeting. The Forum on Public Policy, as a pre-conference, is unique in that it is conducted as a plenary. All of the participants stay together for a day and half engaged in a series of conversations; this format allows for more focused attention to the topics and seems to be popular with those in attendance. The forum participants have become a good mix of academics and policy professionals from state and national entities. But the policy folks

have tended to leave after the pre-conference—before the regular meeting begins. This flight is noteworthy this year because there were 18 proposals for the Policy Forum and 115 submissions to the policy strand of our regular meeting. There is a mismatch here that we need to address.

Second, in our own work, we need to think through quality and relevance. How can we produce work that is high quality and relevant to a policy audience, relevant to the critical issues of the day? It is clear that the relevant topics are those we are inclined to pursue—access, affordability, and accountability. But we need to think during the design of the study about ways that the results can be most useful. When we have results, we need to think about how to present them to an audience that wants to put them to use, not just cite them. We need to do reviews that synthesize findings, not just for our purposes in the review section of a scholarly article, but for their own sake, reviews that capture the significant findings around a topic of concern to policymakers and draw conclusions, at least tentative conclusions. As academics we can carve a topic into ever smaller bits—and keep delving, knowing there is always more to learn. But policymakers cannot wait until all the data are in. They work under a mandate for action—from the legislators, funders, or boards.

Most of us who have been around for a while know how to write a quality piece for an academic journal; we know how to be driven by a theoretical framework; we know how to present the method in ways that are instructive to the audience. But do we know how to take those findings and write a policy brief that will be useful to those engaged in policy decisions? And equally important, will the reviewers of our manuscripts recognize the importance of policy implications? Jeff Milem made the comment at our ASHE summer board meeting that he has received more public comment on the piece he did for a policy audience than any other work he has published. That's quite a commentary. He and Patty Yeager are moderating a session on Friday afternoon about turning research into policy-relevant work. We need to get out of our comfort zone, attend policy-oriented conferences that are foreign to us, read publications that are new to us, and try our hand at policy-relevant work. I know we have a contribution to make.

Third, and finally, in our programs, we need to think about how we are preparing the next generation of scholars. I am guessing that the content of our programs in regard to policy analysis and development is pretty uneven, with some programs doing a fine job of preparing students to do both academic work and policy work, and other programs that probably do less well. In his 2007 report, *Educating Researchers*, Arthur Levine argues that the unwillingness of those in schools of education to engage policymakers and practitioners allowed government, the press, corporations, philanthropists, and a host of reform groups to seize the initiative and dismiss education schools as trivial. Although his point is directed primarily at K–12 issues, our

time is coming. If we aren't preparing our students to do work that informs the higher education issues of concern to policymakers, other groups will step in and do the work.

We also have to ensure that new faculty members do not pay a high price for "applied" work. We can make the case for policy research in tenure and promotion criteria; we can shift our top-tier journals to be policy relevant. These steps are within our control. Those who work closely with graduate students have the opportunity to model the very best of the profession—the commitment to work that is high quality and relevant. We must ask ourselves if we are socializing doctoral students to be the kind of researchers, teachers, practitioners, and policymakers we hope them to be. The culture we create, the culture they experience, provides the socialization of the next generation of faculty members. What do we as an academic profession value? How do we define quality? Can we defend our traditional notions of quality in today's context?

Which brings me to my final point. The questions that are being addressed today in the states and at the national level are critical to our professional lives. The demands being placed on higher education are real; the responses will come from governors, legislators, board members, and senior administrators. If we, as scholars of higher education, do not step up to provide the research and the commentary on these issues, decisions will be made and priorities will be set without the benefit of our thinking. We need to be engaged in the debate about quality, or quality will be redefined for us. The stakes are high. Faculty must be part of the solution or they will definitely be seen as the problem.

There is much that we as members of the faculty can do to regain the trust and respect of the public. To do so, we as scholars of higher education, have to focus on our work—the excellence and relevance of our work in our discipline, with our students, and for our states and the nation. I think if we focus on that legacy, on the quality and relevance of our work, we will ensure the long-term health and vitality of our academic work in service to the public.

Thank you for your thoughtful attention.

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