

## *“This Bequest of Wings Was But a Book”*

BRUCE C. HAFEN

There is one more award we need to make. A year ago I hinted at my need for help in understanding the term *provost*. From several suggested definitions, the winner of the 1990 “Define That Provost” sweepstakes is Art Bassett from the College of Humanities, who says that the term obviously means “the person most like Provo.”

Now, whether you like that definition depends, of course, on how you feel about Provo. We could be talking here about the happiest one in Happy Valley, or the one whose food storage room most resembles Storehouse Market. But the most unsettling implication of being the person most like Provo hit me when I read in the 18 August *Deseret News* that the Provo-Orem area has now achieved the lofty distinction of being named by the EPA to “the dirty ten,” that exclusive hit list of the U.S. cities with the dirtiest air.

On that subject, a young man who had spent his entire life in Provo (he had never left Utah County) decided to attend Ricks College. His roommates came to the Idaho Falls Airport to meet him. As he walked into that clear, pure, mountain air, he began to wheeze and cough. Turning blue, he fell to the ground gasping for breath. Then one of his roommates, being from Los Angeles, sensed what might be wrong. So he signaled the others, and they dragged the

boy over to the back of a waiting bus, where he could breathe in air to which his system was more accustomed; then he was alright.

We have spent much of this last year just trying to know the major issues the university faces in the 1990s. I originally planned to talk about several of those matters here—admissions, gender-related concerns, faculty-student relationships, our emerging internationalism, and so on. But in the interest of time, I will treat only one topic today, and I look forward to a review of other important matters on another day.

I want to discuss the university’s expectations regarding the scholarly and creative work of the faculty. My purpose is not to announce new policies but *only* to initiate a campus dialogue that will clarify the meaning of faculty scholarship in light of the university’s mission. To give context to what follows, I begin by noting two sources of current criticism of higher education, first among the American public and second among members of the LDS Church.

---

*Bruce C. Hafen was the provost of BYU when this address was given during the Annual University Conference on 27 August 1990.*

Universities are criticized increasingly for some effects of the “marketing” of higher education during recent years, when a reduced pool of prospective students led many schools to make glossy sales pitches to governments, students, and the public. Critics question the disproportionate role of financial considerations in athletic policies; they challenge tuition increases by wondering, as the *Wall Street Journal* did, whether universities “exist mainly for the benefit of the faculty,” because too many schools “seem more interested in attracting students than educating them” (*Wall Street Journal*, 12 March 1990, p. A10).

Two recent books that typify this critique are Charles Sykes’ *Profscam* and Page Smith’s *Killing the Spirit*. Sykes, a journalist, regards most university-level research as a scam and a racket that abandons undergraduate classrooms to overworked and poorly trained teaching assistants. Smith, a former university professor and administrator, is more moderate, but he still begins from the premise that “the vast majority of the so-called research turned out in the modern university is essentially worthless . . . busywork . . . [that] deprives students of . . . thoughtful and considerate . . . teaching” (Smith, p. 7). Such an extreme conclusion strikes me as an unfortunate exaggeration.

Henry Rosovsky of Harvard has defended the research university model in his new book, *The University*. He simply disagrees with the critics about the frequency of faculty abuses in research. Rosovsky also responds that the missions of individual colleges and universities vary greatly, and most of them do not research at all. Moreover, he notes, only 25 percent of all university-level faculty say they are more interested in research than in teaching.

This national debate is provoking serious talk about reform among responsible voices. Stanford President Donald Kennedy recently asked his faculty to reaffirm “that teaching in all its forms is the primary task” (*Los Angeles*

*Times*, 6 April 1990). And Ernest Boyer of the respected Carnegie Foundation has announced a forthcoming report that urges a broadened definition of scholarship. *The Washington Post* sees the Kennedy and Boyer statements as signs that “universities are finally ready to discuss how this long-desired shift [toward greater emphasis on teaching] can be brought about” (17 April 1990). I will return to Boyer’s proposal shortly.

Consider now some attitudes among church members about BYU, some of which echo the public’s concerns about other universities. Academic standards have been rising at BYU during a time of rapid Church growth among peoples having lower educational and income levels than are typical among U.S. Church members. As the educational quality of BYU is rising, the education level of the average Church member, worldwide, is falling. As time goes on, these long-term trends will make BYU seem less representative of the Church membership.

Our enrollment ceiling accounts for most of the unhappiness Church members feel about BYU. No matter what our admission standards are, they will seem unfair to people who are excluded by them. Thus, some say that BYU is elitist, snobbish, and out of touch with the mainstream of the Church; others say that transfer students are unwelcome here, and that full-time professors are too busy with research to spend time with students, especially freshmen and sophomores. A parent of a BYU student recently expressed his concern that we are making the mistake of the apostate Nephites, among whom “the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches” (3 Nephi 6:12).

Another man recently compared what he thinks BYU is doing with King Solomon did—creating a dazzling, gold-plated temple

of learning designed primarily to impress the modern equivalents of Pharaoh and the Queen of Sheba. He argues that our seeking credibility with other universities runs the serious risk of replacing our standards of judgment with theirs. Our growing national and international acceptance may brush up against that risk, but it is also true that Pharaoh and the Queen of Sheba are the employers of our graduates, who are increasingly acting as young Josephs in a worldwide Egypt, rendering great service in ways that benefit the work of the Church.

BYU's emerging strength is one of the Church's greatest assets, and we must find ways to help others know us better. But the challenge of how we are perceived is not trivial. We enjoy a very serious, long-term relationship with the tithing payers of the Church, who understandably feel a special claim to our resources. Without compromising our commitment to educational quality, we must find creative ways to share the blessing of BYU as widely as possible. Our attitudes must leave no doubt in Church members' minds that we are doing all within our power to remain faithful to their trust.

BYU really doesn't have the same problems Stanford has, because we have generally maintained a strong commitment to teaching. Thus, I feel about the teaching/research debate on our campus the way some writers feel about the grace/works debate in Christian theology. C. S. Lewis wrote that this dispute "does seem to me like asking which blade in a pair of scissors is most necessary" (*Mere Christianity*, p. 129). And one theologian believes that stressing the dangers of "works" is "inappropriate if the listeners are not even trying!" and most listeners "are not in much danger of working their way to heaven" (Paul Holmer, *Theology Today*, vol. 10, p. 474). Not many BYU faculty are in danger of researching their way completely out of teaching.

At the same time, we must not let our twin commitments to scholarship and teaching

obscure some complex variables that need to be addressed. We must be sure that the *implementation* of our scholarly expectations brings out the best our faculty have to give in ways that are consistent with the university's mission.

Two factors persuade me that we need a modest adjustment in our approach to the issue of faculty scholarship: resource allocation and variations among disciplines. Regarding the allocation of resources, I offer two illustrations to support the general proposition that we may already be stretching the precious resource of faculty time too thin.

A committee of the BYU Faculty Advisory Council in 1988 concluded, based on campus-wide faculty interviews, that "rising expectations for scholarly attainment will increasingly come into serious . . . conflict with the teaching workload of the university unless the size of the student body is reduced, the size of the faculty is increased, or scholarly expectations are moderated." One empirical finding that supports this conclusion is that, according to our faculty load reports, the BYU faculty increased the fraction of its time spent on research by about 35 percent between 1980 and 1989 without a corresponding increase in new teaching resources. Although higher academic expectations are a welcome step in the university's progress, the Faculty Advisory Council committee believes we may be fueling some part of that progress by a form of deficit spending.

President Lee and I recently asked a national leader in higher education for his view on faculty research at BYU. He immediately asked us, what is your student-faculty ratio? We replied that it is about 21:1. He replied that most major research universities are at about 16 and the better ones are at 12. I have since noted that Stanford's ration is 10. Stated another way, (based on 1988 expenditures) major research universities typically spend about \$20,000 annually per student—two and a half times as much as the \$8,000 BYU spends annually

per student. In this seasoned leaders view, it is impossible for us to compete across the board with graduate research universities without a monumental change in our resource base; and without that change, a large-scale research campaign would lead only to frustration and disappointment.

And what is true for student-faculty ratios is obviously true for new buildings, research space, equipment, and every other resource-related question. As King Benjamin said, “See that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength” (Mosiah 4:27).

Our friend then asked us whether the BYU board of trustees is likely to favor massive new infusions of tithing, tuition, or governmental funding—enough to reduce our student-faculty ration substantially. Our answer had to be no, given the effect of the Church’s international growth on tithing resources, given the demand for us to accept more students, and given the concern of the trustees about dependence on governmental aid. And even if more funds were available, undergraduate admissions pressures would dictate giving *more* students per dollar the blessing of a BYU experience, not fewer.

It is clearly better to be a first-rate teaching institution than a third-rate research institution. But that does not mean we don’t care about faculty scholarship. On the contrary, a primary difference between a first-rate and a third-rate *teaching* university is in the quality of the faculty’s scholarly and creative work. Thus I am grateful that our student-faculty ratio is 21 rather than 30, as it is at many teaching-oriented institutions. The fine work already taking place across the campus with our limited resources demonstrates that we are clearly capable of pursuing a broad commitment to faculty scholarship that strengthens—indeed, is absolutely essential to—our teaching mission.

But we must pursue that goal with realistic expectations about the use of faculty time and

research support. Harvard’s Henry Rosovsky reports that at major research universities, about two-thirds of the students are graduate students. At BYU, one-tenth are graduate students. He notes that the rough rule of thumb in research universities is that the faculty spend about half their time in teaching-related activity and the other half on research. A 10:1 student-faculty ratio makes that allocation possible. More specifically, Rosovsky says that in research universities, 33 percent of the faculty spend over twenty hours per week on research. By contrast, in what he calls “top” teaching colleges, only 5 percent of the faculty spend over twenty hours per week on research (Rosovsky, p. 81). The fact that the top teaching colleges devote somewhat less time to research does not make the teaching at these schools necessarily inferior. Rosovsky describes the teaching of undergraduates by heavily research-oriented faculty not as better, but only as “intellectually different” from more teaching-oriented instruction (p. 86). Indeed, for teaching undergraduates, he advocates the use of older faculty, rather than fresh, young researchers, because in teaching undergraduates (as distinguished from teaching graduate students), “the latest specialist wrinkles are less important than wisdom” (p. 217).

I turn now to the fact or differences among academic disciplines as a variable that affects the way we define scholarly expectations. As strong as our current students are, their interests range very widely. In some ways, the most exciting conception of our teaching role here is the preparation of truly promising young men and women for graduate and professional studies at the nation’s leading research universities. BYU has fulfilled that role over the years with increasing success. But the fraction of our students who are actually on that track is small. About 55 percent of our 27,000 students eventually complete a bachelor’s degree here or elsewhere within twelve years from the time they begin. Of this number, some 30 percent

will do postgraduate work, or about 4,500. The remaining 22,500 students are involved in an amazing mix of applied, professional, and vocational programs leading, at best, to terminal undergraduate degrees.

The faculty strengths required to serve these diverse interests are not likely to come all from the same cookie cutter. In some of our strong theory-oriented disciplines, the faculty devote great time and effort toward the aspiration of publishing in the nation's finest theory-oriented journals. I have spent much of my professional life pursuing that goal. I know firsthand what it requires and I care about it intensely. But I would not impose that goal uniformly and uncritically on such disciplines as nursing, religion, music, art, dance, theatre, and several other disciplines.

Similarly, I have profound respect for the basic research accomplishments of our faculty in engineering, in the physical and math sciences, and in other quantitative and empirical fields. Their high quality work deserves our strong, continued support. But I note that the statistics listing the top 100 research universities by amounts of federal research grants totally exclude from their computations the humanities, education, business, law, and much of the social sciences. Thus, the amounts in federal grants an academic department receives may or may not tell us about the quality of the department's scholarly work when measured by the standards of the relevant discipline. No wonder William Schaefer, former executive vice chancellor and professor of English at UCLA, would write on behalf of what you might call sanity in the humanities that we must stop "pretending that literary scholarship and criticism are akin to scientific research." This doesn't mean that scholarship in the humanities is less important—just that it is different.

Not only the nature but the *purpose* of our scholarly work will vary across disciplines and among individual faculty. Perhaps the highest

purpose of university research is the discovery of new knowledge through basic research, which can contribute enormously to society and bring great credit to the university. Many BYU faculty are now capable of and devoted to such research programs, which we can and must support enthusiastically. But by our institutional nature, the ultimate purpose of *most* faculty scholarship at BYU is to enhance teaching—not because this is necessarily a "better" form of scholarly work, but because it is the form most directly related both to our mission and our resource base. As Dallin Oakes said here in 1975, scholarly and creative work that strengthens our effectiveness as a teaching institution "is the principal justification for all our research and our other creative activities." And as Jeffrey Holland and Jae Ballif wrote in Memorandum 11 to the faculty, "the scholarly work of the University must infuse and inspire university teaching."

Whether one's scholarly work enhances or detracts from teaching is a question of fact, and that fact can be measured in faculty performance reviews. Frequently, scholarship strengthens teaching in very indirect ways—not by focusing on curriculum material, but simply by bringing a teacher to life. I have taught subjects in which I had done no research, and then I have taught subjects in which I was doing extensive research. As one of my students pointed out to me, I am a totally different teacher in the field of my research. I am excited about recent developments, I try out new ideas on my students, and I simply have a perspective about fundamental issues I can gain in no other way.

But I have also seen the faculty jet-setters who become so intoxicated with professional travel and ivory tower projects that they utterly lose touch with their teaching and their students. For those people, as Indiana University's Lewis Miller noted, "time devoted to the art of teaching is, with few exceptions, time subtracted from [what they believe is]



the more important task of establishing a national reputation in research" (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 13 September 1989, p. A52). Scholarly work that strengthens teaching will not always build a national reputation in research—although in some disciplines, it can be done.

These thoughts about resource allocation and variety among disciplines bring me to the point of introducing a new definition of faculty scholarship provided by Ernest Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation's forthcoming report, "The New American Scholar." Responding both to public frustration and to faculty confusion on this subject, Boyer recommends four forms of scholarship that should be accepted for tenure reviews, promotions, and other reward systems: discovering knowledge, integrating knowledge, applying knowledge, and presenting knowledge.

A word about each category:

1. *Discovered* knowledge is basic research that seeks to develop new knowledge. I have already noted the first-place significance of this discovery process.

2. *Integrated* knowledge makes connections across disciplines. This form of scholarship suggests the new hyphenated disciplines such as bio-engineering and psycho-linguistics. It also represents the best spirit of general education. Among other things, it suggests the intellectually alive teacher who, as our own Don Fleming has urged, is "as likely to be well read as well published—a teacher with a book under her arm that you know she is reading." One important form of integrated knowledge at BYU is work that integrates religious perspectives with the perspective of one's discipline; however, integration of this kind requires real rigor on both the religious and the disciplinary side, lest the integration appear to devalue both religion and the academic field.

3. *Applied* knowledge reflects the best tradition of land-grant colleges, where theory is

applied to solve environmental, industrial, or other real-life problems.

4. *Presented* knowledge refers to both studying and improving teaching. Such scholarship would include the creative development of curriculum and classroom materials, textbooks, thoughtful essays, or empirical work that improves one's own teaching in form or content, as well as helping others to understand one's discipline. I wonder if we might find a way to include studies of the mentoring of individual students within this category. Mentoring is a critically important form of "life teaching," and our reward system should encourage it. I would also include here scholarship directed toward teaching that reaches beyond purely cognitive processes, when appropriate to the discipline. I am thinking of general education and other learning environments where good teaching can engender a disciplined form of passion, bringing a student to life spiritually and aesthetically as well as intellectually. My heart has always ached for sensitive humanities graduates whose immersion into the coldly analytical process of law has stripped them of their sense of wonder.

5. For our purposes, I would add to Boyer's list a fifth category called "creative expression," whether written, performed, displayed, or otherwise artistically expressed, and other written work of all kinds, including literary criticism, analytical essays, etc.

For these five forms of scholarship to satisfy our high standards of quality at BYU, scholarly and creative projects should meet at least five additional criteria. I especially thank Douglas Smoot for these ideas, which I have combined with Ernest Boyer's suggestions.

1. Clearly articulated purposes and procedures that are consistent with departmental, college, and university missions.

2. Documentation of the scholarly process, as appropriate.

3. The scholar's critical evaluation of his or her own results.

4. Some element of originality.

5. Peer review, in any one of several ways, on this campus or elsewhere.

With this definition of scholarship, I would urge that we expect *every* BYU faculty member to engage continuously in some acceptable level of scholarly and creative work. Toward that end, we should consider the use of low-key but meaningful five-year reviews for each member of the faculty, including full professors with continuing faculty status. The faculty have already adopted such a review process at the Law School, and they regard it as a nonthreatening, positive process of collegial support.

Each faculty member's expectations should be developed in an individually negotiated understanding in writing with the department chair, and individual performance should be evaluated according to that understanding. Particular approaches will vary among individuals and departments as circumstances, needs, and interests require. Some scholarly projects will be short-term; some will be long-term. Some projects will require more of one's time than others, but *all* faculty should do scholarly work to some meaningful degree. A faculty member's own mix of teaching, committee, and scholarly time commitments may vary from one period of a career to another. Such variety could prove very healthy. When performed at equal levels of quality, the university should value all assignments equally, whether a heavy research commitment coupled with a low teaching load or a heavy teaching load coupled with less time-consuming scholarly and creative projects. Salaries, promotions, awards, and other incentives should reflect this attitude.

The cumulative result of this individual assignment process should help to relieve any time pressures that are now actually impinging on our primary teaching mission. Experience may teach us that we also need to clarify cer-

tain departmental and college goals in some way that reflects these adjustments.

I am aware that individualized faculty assignments may seem difficult to manage. But, as Stephen Robinson of Religious Education has suggested, think of each department as a bag of golf clubs. You might be a low-numbered wood or a high-numbered iron—each club plays a unique role in accomplishing the department's mission, whether your department happens to be in the rough or on the fairway. I can hear what many are thinking already: nobody wants to be a sand wedge, much less the department putter. But remember what the real golfers say—drive for show and putt for dough.

Brothers and sisters, I realize that in many ways we are not as alive intellectually at BYU as we might be, despite great progress in recent years. Not all of us are as alive spiritually as we should be. I worry that some may take my talking about a more flexible definition of scholarship as a signal that less is expected of the faculty, intellectually *or* spiritually. My purpose is by no means to de-emphasize scholarship; on the contrary, I seek to clarify the *nature* and *meaning* of scholarship in order to emphasize it more broadly and more realistically in ways that are consistent with the university's mission and resources. I honestly believe that we can *lift* our overall level of professional intensity through a conscientious understanding of the resource allocation process, variations among disciplines, and the real purposes of scholarship—and with consistent follow-through on individualized assignments by department chairs.

I was impressed recently in looking through our new campus publication "New Books," which summarizes about 175 scholarly books published by members of the BYU community in the two and a half years since 1987. These books range from scientific reports and theoretical treatises to leading textbooks and religious works. I thought of how far we have

come since 1974, when the faculty produced 26 books. Of course, books represent only a fraction of the faculty's research and creative work, and some books are better than others. But there is something about a book—especially when it captures and represents a sound educational process, for both author and reader. As Groucho Marx said (according to Phil Snyder), "Outside of a dog, man's best friend is a book; inside of a dog, it's too dark to read."

As I conclude, I am thinking of books as a symbol for all the forms of true scholarly and creative work among our various disciplines.

I love Emily Dickinson's lines:

*She ate and drank the precious words  
Her spirit grew robust;  
She knew no more that she was poor,  
Nor that her frame was dust.  
She danced along the dingy days,  
And this bequest of wings  
Was but a book.  
What liberty a loosened spirit brings!*

A book gives wings of liberty, not only to a reader, but also to an author—wings for miraculous flights that span both continents and centuries. As Charles Kingsley wrote, "Except a living [person], there is nothing more wonderful than a book!"—a "message to us . . . from human souls we never saw, who lived, perhaps thousands of miles [or thousands of years] away. And yet these [people], in those little sheets of paper, speak to us, arouse us, terrify us, teach us, comfort us, open their hearts to us as brothers."

You may remember our splendid commencement speaker from last April, Mary Ann Glendon, an internationally known family and comparative law scholar from Harvard University. I first met Mary Ann in a book. She spoke to me and taught me, stretching and enriching my thinking and writing. Only later did I discover how closely she had been reading my own little sheets of printed paper.

When she and I finally met in person, we felt like old friends, even valued allies.

During my years at Ricks College, I spent some of my summer months doing research and writing at the Law School here in Provo. One day a close associate in Idaho asked me what in the world I did all day when I went to Provo. "Do you have to just sit there and read books?" he asked. I replied, "It's not that I *have* to read books—it's that I *get* to read books." That is how I view what I have talked about today: it's not that we *have* to find creative ways to stretch our minds, our souls, and our students through our scholarship—it's that we *get* to. If a university teacher thinks of this as "I *have* to be reading and writing," he or she probably should be doing something else for a living.

There is a grand tradition in the Church about eating and drinking precious printed words from which our spirits grow robust—the words of the scriptures. Just as I first met Mary Ann Glendon in a book, I first met Moroni in a book. I had read through the Book of Mormon before my mission, but Moroni first became real to me the night I finished reading that holy book as a German missionary. I was reading by myself late one evening. As my eyes drank in Moroni's words, an unforgettable chill ran down my spine:

*And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust? [Moroni 10:27]*

In some way that bypassed the rational part of my consciousness, I suddenly knew in the core of my being that Moroni was a real person and that I would actually meet him face-to-face some day. I still know that. I brushed away the tears and wrote in the margin of my book by



verse 27: "Remember this." From those little sheets of paper, he opened his heart and spoke to me in ways that fixed the course of my life. "And this bequest of wings was but a book."

When Karl G. Maeser died, his students composed a song for his funeral, a song of such quality that it was included in the LDS hymn-books for many years. Its first verse begins,

"Come lay his books and papers by; he shall not need them more; the ink shall dry upon his pen, so softly close the door . . . the teacher's work is done." The teacher's work, especially here at Karl Maeser's school, is a deeply satisfying labor, with students and books and papers that bless us all the days God lets us live. What a good way to spend our lives.

