

# Intellectual Challenges in the Twenty-First Century: New Roles and Rewards for University Faculty

**Carol A. Cartwright**  
**President, Kent State University**

I'm delighted to join you as we continue a national conversation about new faculty roles and rewards for a new century of service. And I'm especially pleased to have this opportunity to offer a contextual umbrella for your brainstorming and follow-up plans.

At the 1994 American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) Conference for the Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards, Ernie Boyer described his overwhelming sense that "... a new, more authentic understanding of scholarship is beginning to emerge."

"I have this feeling," he said, "that. . . we are beginning to find a new language. A common language ... that will help revitalize research, give new dignity to teaching, and help the academy become more responsive "

Perhaps you participated in the forums and attended that conference. In fact, AAHE was urged to create the Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards during a series of discussions among provosts from land-grant and research universities. They wanted to ensure that their universities would be as responsive to a society undergoing a knowledge revolution as they were during America's industrial and agricultural revolutions.

It is not surprising that leaders at such institutions remain in the vanguard of an effort to rethink mission and the relationship between mission and faculty roles. More than 130 years ago, newly created land-grant colleges and universities added an unprecedented service dimension to the mission of American higher education, cutting into college curricula with a sharp, moral edge.

To their great credit, modern-day leaders of state universities and land-grant colleges, and professional organizations such as the AAHE, have been willing to confront increasingly tough questions about what we do in higher education and the degree of quality with which we do it. Today, this movement to consider the alignment of mission and faculty roles is gaining momentum through the innovative efforts of faculty and administrative leaders nationwide.

My term on the AAHE Board of Directors paralleled the early development of this new movement in important ways, and I had opportunities for presidential leadership at Kent which I tried to use wisely to add to the dialogue.

Through your own involvement with organizations and peers at the institutional, regional, state, and national levels, each of you has had a valuable vantage point for leadership and for tracking efforts to transform higher education in general — and the professoriate in particular — to meet the challenges of the next century.

Without leadership, we would not have:

- The aforementioned Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards which, since 1992, has been focusing on the fit between mission and faculty roles, and making the case for scholarship — in all its forms — as a public activity.

- A related pilot study of “The Collaborative Department,” showing how five institutions, including Kent State University, were inching toward goals derived from clearly defined institutional missions and clearly differentiated departmental roles. The project is based on the premise that decisions about faculty roles and rewards should be made at the departmental level where the most effective balance among institutional and unit missions, disciplinary precepts, and individual strengths can be achieved.

- “Pathways: Faculty Careers and Employment in the Twenty-First Century,” another AAHE venture unveiled last March. The two-year project is intended to broach, broaden and legitimize a national dialogue about academic career options.

- Then there is a new effort by NASULGC to define the challenges facing public higher education in the twenty-first century and to formulate strategies for addressing them.

- Leadership is also evident in a variety of efforts to rethink faculty roles by disciplinary associations. A fascinating project in this area was completed at Syracuse University under the leadership of Bob Diamond and published by AAHE under the title *The Disciplines Speak*. The project supported sixteen disciplinary and professional associations — in the humanities, social sciences, sciences, arts, and the professions — in crafting formal statements describing the full scope of scholarship and professional work in their fields.

- And MSU’s report, referenced often here, is a thoughtful analysis of issues, impediments, and ideas about higher education’s emerging outreach agenda. It too represents leadership in articulating a view of outreach as a legitimate form of scholarship — one which should be integrated fully into academic life.

As each of us here is no doubt aware, these projects — and institutional innovations from clinical professorships to tenured part-time appointments — have not yet transformed the academy.

Recall that I noted Ernie Boyer’s optimistic assessment that the growing involvement in such projects has led to a new language for a new millennium. While I share his enthusiasm, it is important to remember that language acquisition is an incremental process, one that requires tolerance for frustration and a willingness to take risks, and one that is subject to varying translations.

These projects are promising first steps to move discussions from our intellectual incubators to our campuses. I believe it is now time for us to

serve as interpreters and to communicate on a larger scale that we are ready, willing and able to support nontraditional, flexible approaches to roles and rewards. This is the leadership challenge.

As language students often report, skills acquired via books and classroom rehearsals are often a far cry from the way a language is practiced in the “real world.” Thus, truly mastering any language is impossible without an understanding of and sensitivity to culture — past and present.

The academic culture of the last fifty years, born in a postwar race for scientific superiority, has valued and rewarded research — research published in the “right” refereed journals and supported by the “right” grants — above all other scholarly pursuits. It is only natural that such a culture has left most faculty reluctant to embrace a new mind-set and skeptical that the new language they hear is anything more than empty rhetoric.

Nevertheless, the last few years have provided evidence that culture shifts are possible within the academic arena — and with promising results. For example, significant changes have accompanied the advent of continuous improvement processes on campuses nationwide. Just a few years ago at most colleges and universities — Kent State included — CQI was an alien concept couched in an equally alien language. Today it is the mother tongue and accepted practice throughout many campuses. In the coming years, I expect continuous quality improvement principles will have an academic accent on many more of our campuses. More leaders will encourage these common sense approaches for problem solving.

And there is more. As our campuses were hit with a tidal wave of technology, many faculty and staff members found the water was fine. Not long ago, surfing was a water sport and gophers were burrowing rodents. Now we not only are fluent in the language of cyberspace, but e-mail, e-journals and list serves have become accepted — in many cases, essential — research and teaching tools.

New technologies can be of immeasurable use in our outreach efforts, providing user-friendly vehicles for academic and consulting services far beyond campus boundaries.

One more, particularly germane case: When I arrived at Kent State University in 1991, there wasn’t even a plan for an institutional strategic plan. In a two-year effort that included an unprecedented variety of voices, we revised our mission statement and completed a universitywide planning document. We also embarked on a study of faculty work as an extension of the first discussions of “scholarship reconsidered.”

Today, with Boyer’s book in one hand and our strategic plan in the other, faculty members fill our Pew Roundtable forums to capacity, our Faculty Senate has developed a set of “Principles for the Evaluation and Reward of Faculty Scholarship” that incorporates all aspects of scholarship,” and the budget process has been demystified as department, college, and

systemwide priorities are clearly and publicly set with mission foremost in mind.

In effect, strategic plans and the mission statements from which they are derived are the “grammar” and “syntax” on which our common language of roles and rewards must be based. While we must speak this academic Esperanto within a diversity of campus cultures and with disciplinary dialects, most academic communities share a basic understanding of mission. Our challenge is to convince faculty of our willingness to support new ways to fulfill all components of our missions. Moreover, we must demonstrate that they can do so not only with professional impunity but with appropriate rewards.

Our challenge does not stem from a general lack of interest in activities other than research among faculty. At a recent meeting, I heard this telling story from a newly tenured faculty member in one of the most rigorous departments in one of the most prestigious research universities in the country: “Now that I’ve played the game and have tenure, I’m free to teach and work with students and others to solve real-world problems!” Our leadership challenge is to understand this environment and transform it so young scholars can deal with peer pressure and risk their own approach.

I find Michigan State’s approach to defining outreach — scholarly outreach, to be precise — helpful here. Specifically, the report on University Outreach at MSU identifies “research outreach,” “teaching outreach,” and “service outreach” as distinct — and equally legitimate — forms of scholarship. Kent’s Applied Psychology Center exemplifies “outreach research.” Center faculty are exploring nonmedical approaches to AIDS prevention, including a successful project to build self-esteem and assertiveness skills in young, inner-city women. I would note that, externally, both research and outreach components of this project are being recognized and rewarded — to the tune of several million federal dollars as well as keen interest by health care providers and social service agencies nationwide.

We know that faculty perceptions about the status of research versus outreach are influenced by years (when is it safe?) and by peers (will my colleagues value it?). In addition, research and publication continue as academe’s most-used basis for rewards because they seem to offer explicit quality benchmarks. We must make it an immediate priority to develop compacts about what constitutes quality for each type of scholarship. Despite low comfort levels with defining quality in nonresearch activities, there is no valid reason why all scholarly pursuits should not be critically reviewed to the same degree as research.

Stanford’s Elliot Eisner put this into perspective at our annual teaching conference at the Kent campus earlier this month. He argued that if the voice of virtuoso Luciano Pavarotti can profit from a coach, surely faculty teaching — and, by extension, outreach — can benefit from critical review and feedback!

Further, we must distinguish quantity versus quality of work in all aspects of scholarship. Maynard Mack, head of the University of Maryland's Lilly Center for Teaching Excellence, found the bottom line when he wrote in *Metropolitun Universities* that "Quality in any area should be rewarded, but mediocrity, even if it is published, should not."

The work that has brought us here, and the common language we have developed, convince me that we can find quality indicators for all types of scholarship. For example, in the draft manuscript of a book on assessing scholarship, the sequel to *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Boyer advances six practical and plausible standards of faculty performance that apply across the disciplines: knowledge of field; clarity of goals; use of appropriate methodology; effective use of resources; quality of communication; and significance of results.

I hasten to add that while sheer quantity is too often allowed to pass for quality in the reward process, there are many impressive instances in which faculty have mobilized against mediocrity. I remember vividly an instance in my career when a colleague in one field was promoted from assistant to full professor and granted tenure on the basis of a single, path-breaking work. In the same cycle, a colleague from another department with a record of prolific-but-pedestrian publications was denied tenure. Why? Because faculty had the confidence and the courage to stand up for quality and make each case so compelling that no other outcome was conceivable.

As leaders, we must nurture an environment in which such unconventional decisions are perceived as worthwhile; in which we invite innovation and prefer the possibility of failure over the power of precedents set in a long-gone era — precedents that don't address societal needs now and certainly won't be adequate in the future.

Margaret Wheatley expands on this observation in *Leadership and the New Science*. Her provocative book applies cutting-edge science to organizations. Wheatley shows how modern society operates on often obsolete constructs of seventeenth-century Newtonian physics. In doing so, she builds a case for letting new knowledge about how the world works guide organizational structure.

The applications for higher education are intriguing. For example, Wheatley notes that "Much of the present thinking about organizational design stresses fluid and permeable forms that can be resilient to change." In other words, teamwork and flexibility are the hallmarks of organizations based on new science. Translating this to higher education, we can ask: As long as missions are met, why shouldn't colleges and universities negotiate mission-specific, individual faculty contracts? Or offer short-term contracts for mission-directed outreach? Why not indeed — if leaders promote such thinking?

The outcome of this organizational change should be universities in which faculty and administrative roles are integrated; categories of

scholarship are less important, while quality and excellence of a variety of contributions are paramount; and in which the formation of effective problem-solving teams is a priority.

The need for more — and more imaginative — teams has not gone unnoticed by higher education. We already have seen the power of partnerships in interdisciplinary collaborations.

Interdisciplinary research centers and institutes are now commonplace on our campuses. Faculty engaged in these efforts have become “multilingual” in terms of basic disciplinary vocabulary, and have learned the language of cooperation.

Interinstitutional groupings also are proving advantageous, as those of you involved with the Committee on Institutional Cooperation know so well. The ten universities of the “Excellence Across Multiple Disciplines” initiative are demonstrating a noteworthy twist on the “strength-in-numbers” strategy. It is an approach that expedites the development of new models for faculty roles and rewards; supports a full and balanced range of teaching, research, and outreach missions; and, in the process, allows greater responsiveness to societal needs.

I applaud the efforts generated by this CIC initiative, including those at:

- Penn State, which has developed a departmental model for peer evaluation of outreach activities;
- The University of Wisconsin-Madison, which has formulated criteria and procedures which encourage and recognize outreach scholarship; and
- The University of Iowa, which has tested departmentwide contracting for faculty roles and functions.

The formation of institutional clusters to find a realistic balance among faculty roles, institutional missions, and societal needs is a strategy well worth consideration nationwide. Experimenting with change as a group of similar institutions has several advantages. For example, messages about the need for new approaches to roles, rewards, and evaluation become louder, clearer, and more coherent.

CIC projects point the way to aligning academic structure and functions in ways that address all mission commitments. I’ll borrow from Wheatley’s book again to stress that any attempts to find this better fit, whether independently, or with academic allies, are worth beginning. As she explains, “In a dynamic, changing system, the slightest variation can have explosive results....” In fact, chaos theory posits that the flap of a butterfly wing in Tokyo can affect a tornado in Texas!

It is possible, however, to be a bit more precise in predicting the evolution of widespread change. As things stand now, computer and networking technologies are spurring many of the changes in faculty roles we need —

and need to reward — in order to provide outreach — whether in the form of research, teaching, or service.

As chair of Ohio's Technology in Education Steering Committee, I have had unique glimpses of what twenty-first century learning communities can be like — will be like. We see environments in which all educators have the technology, knowledge, and opportunity to create accessible, active, individualized, and cooperative learning; in which the basic education and higher education communities work synergistically; and in which the educational community works closely with the computer and telecommunications industries.

This ideal is based on existing technologies. Some faculty members offer their courses via the World Wide Web and serve as “telementors” for promising students. And some networks enable students to develop relationships with experts and role models.

An exciting example is Kent's “Science and Math on the Net.” SAM-Net provides access to liquid crystal-based lesson plans and experiments. It also allows teachers and students anywhere in the world to interact with researchers at our Liquid Crystal Institute through the “Ask a Scientist” program.

The technologies that allow such learning communities to thrive will blur the boundaries between education and practice in many disciplines. Mary Walshok, of the University of California-San Diego, calls this “knowledge without boundaries.” In her book of the same title, she predicts that “In the university of the twenty-first century, it is likely that the functions connected with serving the economic, workplace, and civic knowledge needs of the public will be as central as those connected with research, undergraduate, graduate and professional education today” — a theme echoed at this conference in many ways.

In order to expedite the socialization of faculty into campuses without boundaries, we must be vigilant about addressing the human side of hardware. This means providing faculty with ongoing technical training, as well as opportunities to develop skills related to group dynamics — from evaluating group work to evaluating groupware. If we do, I believe most faculty members would happily leave their lecterns to assume the role of “learning consultant.”

As technology gives way to a focus on learners and learning, and outreach moves from the service entrance to the front door of the academy, it makes sense to look at practices in other service professions that could be modified to enhance scholarly outreach.

The benefits of appointing faculty to clinical ranks are obvious in such fields as nursing, psychology, and architecture. These benefits could be extended to any academic area where there is potential for interaction with public or private constituencies, or where students would profit from opportunities to model faculty expertise in action.

This is not to suggest that in the learning communities of the twenty-first century the value of research and researchers will diminish. On the contrary. The societal problems that plague this decade and promise to stalk us into the twenty-first century will necessitate more research — basic, applied, and outreach. The scope of these problems, and the ever greater expectations they arouse in taxpayers, requires research that is directly linked to the specifics of individual appointments and unit missions. At the same time, research cannot be the primary focus of all faculty at all times.

Such a re-thinking will produce what Gene Rice of the Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards has dubbed the “New American Scholar.” This new millennium faculty member will, Rice says, have a career marked by “freer movement between and among the different knowledge domains ... that will encourage faculty to grow and change over time...that involves more collaborative work with colleagues...in which one moves out of academe, and then back again....”

When a faculty member does make a temporary move out of academe, how can such practical issues as load and productivity be evaluated? Here we can turn to the legal profession for a working and workable model of group rewards. Faculty in a department might interact much the same as partners in a law firm, setting individual and collective goals and criteria for evaluation.

I do see the department as the most logical locus of changes in roles, evaluations, and rewards. Projects at your institutions and mine are proving that departments — if adequately empowered — are the most effective centers for framing, planning, and implementing outreach of all types. Here’s where the leadership investment can be very significant.

Our long-term goal is the full institutionalization of our individual and collective experiments at the department level. We must continue to champion changes that upgrade the status of outreach from a peripheral activity; that loosen the stranglehold of a publish or perish culture; and that allow new outreach links and new learning communities.

Which brings me full circle. I started my remarks referring to Ernie Boyer’s statement of confidence in the results of a decade of innovation in words and work.

I, too, am confident that we stand well-positioned to overcome differences in institutional dialects; to extend our conversations to other constituencies; and to accelerate efforts to renegotiate the “contract with America” that higher education has kept for half a century. And, if there is one word from the subtext to emphasize in concluding, I suggest to you that the word is “leadership.” To all of you who have been leaders in this important national conversation — thank you.