

## **Is the Death of the Teacher-Scholar Widening the Chasm Between the Two Cultures?**

C. P. Snow's 1959 Rede Lecture at the University of Cambridge advanced an ongoing dialogue among academics about the noticeable chasm between the humanities and the hard sciences. He stated, "I believe the intellectual life of the whole of western society is increasingly split into two polar groups" (1959, p. 2). 56 years after this influential lecture was first heard, we are still struggling to bridge this gap. Despite great strides having been made, I'm concerned we are at a critical point—a point where multidisciplinary pedagogical approaches are being degraded by outside circumstances, thereby causing division rather than cohesion of the two cultures.

Over time, our academic institutions have evolved into places where intellectuals are encouraged to pursue scholarship while developing new teaching approaches, giving rise to the teacher-scholar model. In 2007, the American Council of Learned Societies recommended that institutions strengthen collaborative research opportunities for students through experiential learning under guided faculty mentorship, and studies confirm that academic institutions valuing undergraduate research experiences have students reporting greater gains across the curriculum, especially in the area of general education (Kuh, Chen, & Laird, 2007).

In addition to enhancing student learning, teacher-scholars are the individuals within academic institutions engaging, interacting and striving to bridge the two cultures. Liberal arts universities, in particular, share a common goal to provide their students with a well-rounded education in both the sciences and the humanities. Here, there is an appreciation for all disciplines, and faculty can see value in students understanding both a Shakespearian play and the laws of thermodynamics. Specifically, it is the faculty scholars within the liberal arts that drive collaborative teaching and foster a culture of respect across disciplines. They teach together, work together on improving curriculum and pedagogy, such as critical thinking and writing across the curriculum, and are the single strongest driving force of interdisciplinary studies.

The hard truth academic institutions are facing in the United States is the necessity to achieve long-term financial stability against a backdrop of stagnant middle-class incomes, rising tuitions, and increased educational alternatives. At the same time, the number of tenure-line teacher-scholar faculty positions is steadily declining, in particular within the liberal arts (Conn, 2010). While institutions are expanding nontraditional offerings, such as pre-professional programs, they are weakening the foundation of a liberal arts education and reducing the faculty that nourish the link between the two cultures that C. P. Snow referred to in his historic lecture. Already tight budgets are being squeezed, and the teacher-scholar model is being left by the wayside, in turn weakening the invaluable liberal arts education. The faculty responsible for fostering communication and collaboration between the two cultures are being lost. In my humble opinion, the death of the teacher-scholar model will inevitably propel the two cultures even further apart.

**Lani Keller**

Quinnipiac University

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