

Teaching and Learning at Ohio State

KAREN A. HOLBROOK,
President
The Ohio State University

Teaching and learning, research and discovery, and service and outreach/engagement are the appropriate couplets to broadly describe the mission of The Ohio State University, but some people will couple teaching and research and argue that they compete with one another in the academy so that teaching or research becomes the issue-one pitted against the other. This argument needs to be laid to rest at Ohio State and probably at other research universities as well because it is an argument that fails to recognize the entire range of our roles and responsibilities within the research university and how they overlap and enhance each other. Teaching and learning contribute to and capitalize on research as well as service and outreach.

Teaching, to many, conjures up images of faculty standing before a class lecturing, leading a discussion, solving problems on the blackboard or whiteboard, or speaking from a PowerPoint presentation projected on a screen. Teaching today is so much more. It is one-on-one instruction in a studio or a research lab, groups of students working

with an instructor in the field or with practitioners and professionals who direct them in internships, co-op experiences, and clinics inside or outside the university. Teaching is faculty members instructing citizens in communities, on farms, in businesses, and in the state house, taking programs and research advances out of the university to improve productivity of a crop or to resurrect a declining business, perhaps to teach how technology can improve work efficiency, or sharing valuable data to guide a decision. Teaching is faculty designing programs to help K-12 teachers develop new approaches to learning and utilization of new technologies. Teaching is students working in study groups, leading discussion sections with and for other students —students teaching each other, and students teaching very young children through programs such as Jump Start and older children through mentoring and other instructional programs.

And a little appreciated fact is that students "teach" faculty. Classes and individual students can often provide an insight not previously considered, ask a question that cuts straight to the heart of a matter and debate an issue in a way that takes it to a new level. Teaching is the academy and extends far beyond the staid image of the classroom. I would posit that everyone in the academy is engaged in some teaching activity, whether it is specifically identified as that or not, and we are here because we value this role.

Let me return to the issue of teaching or research that I seem to have strayed from in my enthusiasm for the wealth of teaching vehicles and opportunities at our university. Research and teaching are linked in our educational program at every level. Our faculty are scholars. To be a scholar, one has to have a thirst for constantly learning more and more about a discipline, keeping current in the knowledge created by others, developing new knowledge to add to the base, and understanding how their field connects to others, adds relevance, and has an impact on society. In short, faculty come to Ohio State with a solid knowledge of their disciplines, but more importantly,

they come with a dedication to and passion for their fields of choice. They love to share that knowledge and describe their breakthroughs in understanding with their colleagues worldwide and with their students. Who better to work with our students?

I recently joined a group of 25 undergraduate students who represented all four classes at a luncheon, and as they introduced themselves, I asked each to offer one message they would like to tell the faculty. Virtually every student included a comment about the "contagious enthusiasm of the faculty for their subject," that hearing about faculty research drew them into a special "inner circle," and that faculty "have an incredible impact on students." The personal experiences faculty share about themselves and time they spend with students beyond the classroom are "remembered forever." Teaching clearly involves many kinds of interactions beyond classroom instruction. The impact of those interactions most likely outlives the didactic information of the course.

It is a privilege for faculty to work with students at Ohio State. The university values and recognizes the richness, commitment, and innovation of teaching through various awards given at the department, college, and university levels. We emphasize the importance of quality teaching through programs that target faculty at all levels of development as well as graduate teaching associates, and by promoting innovative teaching, for example, through e-learning. Our continuing challenge is to understand our students—their changing backgrounds, life styles, schedules, and goals—and to find methods and environments for instruction that connect students with optimal learning experiences, on campus and off. We continually work to reinforce the objectives that are so clearly stated in the third and fourth strategies of our Academic Plan: "to enhance the quality of the teaching and learning environment" and "to enhance and better serve the student body." Teaching is what we do. Learning is the outcome.