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THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH/SCHOLARSHIP

I have always thought of a university as the major source for new ideas that make a positive difference in lives of people. These ideas are born from the creativity of people who subscribe to this philosophy and are free to push the limits of what is known through research and scholarship unfettered by prescriptive goals. Whether the research/scholarship results in a deeper understanding of the laws of nature or of the human spirit, it enriches our lives and serves the greater good of society. Universities are uniquely positioned to disseminate this information through instruction, presentations at conferences, and publication.

Research/scholarship also offers our students one of the most effective ways to learn. Students engaged in research/scholarship develop a higher order of learning than often can occur in the classroom. As students explore the world from artistic expression to zoology and move beyond the current boundaries of our disciplines, they must become intimately familiar with the knowledge base that exists and draw from a number of resources, some beyond their own discipline. In addition, the student must synthesize and analyze the information and gain insight. Whatever the result, it enables students to develop the skill of learning on their own and making thoughtful choices about difficult issues that face humanity. In this age of information overload, these skills will be essential.

Finally, in many cases research/scholarship is not free. The university provides the crucible for research/scholarship, but some of the ingredients must be purchased. Finding these resources can present a challenge. Writing proposals for grants for consideration by agencies or foundations is one significant way to acquire these resources. Resources from grants are essential in some disciplines for offering high quality instruction that the university cannot afford. I would suggest that writing grant proposals is of great benefit in focusing ideas and setting goals, whether or not they get funded. It is hard work, but the excitement and reward for being able to pursue your research/scholarly passion is well worth it. The articles regarding faculty research/scholarship in this issue demonstrate this fact.

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