

Scholarship Statement: Theology

18 September 2008

Mount Saint Mary's University

A member of the Theology Department at Mount Saint Mary's University must be seriously committed to the life of the mind in theology and/or disciplines affiliated to it. Such engagement is necessary for us to contribute to the University's mission:

Mount Saint Mary's is a Catholic institution of higher education dedicated to liberal learning in the pursuit of truth. Mount Saint Mary's, mindful of its role in the Church's mission to the world and respectful of the religious liberty of all, affirms the values and beliefs central to the Catholic vision of the person and society, and seeks to deepen understanding of our faith and its practice in just and compassionate engagement with the world.

Our mission requires that our students be taught by, our academic colleagues be brought into dialogue with, and our Church be served by intellectually active theologians. In the broadest sense, such active involvement in the intellectual conversations that make up the discipline of theology is *scholarship* in our field.

Those who are best situated to evaluate the quality of an individual's contribution to such conversations are one's peers in the discipline. It is necessary therefore that faculty members' work be submitted to their peers for review. Peer-reviewed work is not the whole of scholarship, but for purposes of the evaluation of a faculty member's work in theology it is an essential part, because it shows the validation of one's scholarship by one's disciplinary peers. Since Christian theology is intellectual exchange between the Christian tradition and the cultures in which it takes shape, the theology department encourages interdisciplinary work, and in what follows it should be understood that interdisciplinary work is to be evaluated by peers in the relevant disciplines, including those outside theology.

In theology, the ordinary forum of peer-reviewed work is the publication of books through scholarly publishing houses and articles in peer-reviewed journals. Ordinarily, therefore, publication of peer-reviewed articles and/or books is to be considered a *sine qua non* for tenure and promotion in the theology department. (As non-print publication becomes more important, methods of peer review will evolve for its media, and such peer-reviewed publications will be relevant to evaluation of faculty scholarship.)

Peer-reviewed scholarly work consists in a variety of kinds, and the typology proposed by Ernest Boyer is appropriate to the discipline of theology: (1) the *scholarship of discovery* advances a discipline through discoveries in research, new interpretations of texts, new arguments on doctrinal questions, and the like; (2) the *scholarship of integration* fits items of research into larger intellectual patterns within one's discipline and/or establishes connections across the disciplines, placing specialized knowledge into a larger context; (3) the *scholarship of application* applies the findings of discovery and synthesis to practical questions; (4) the *scholarship of teaching*, insofar as it is peer-reviewed, is not the research that goes into one's teaching but communication to one's peers concerning the pedagogy of one's discipline.

Besides peer-reviewed scholarship, there are many kinds of *scholarly activity* that are not peer-reviewed but are important to the work of theologians and are appropriately considered in

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the department's and university's evaluation of the scholarship of theology department members. These may be classified as follows (with acknowledgement of the overlap among them and between them and peer-reviewed scholarship):

1. Scholarship made accessible: writing in more popular theological and religious forums such as *America*, *Commonweal*, *Liguorian*, and *The Tablet*—this involves both scholarship (people with a certain expertise are the ones who are asked to write) and the ability to communicate or present scholarly work in an accessible and understandable manner.

2. Scholarly development: activities that develop an individual as a scholar, such as attendance at conferences, participation in seminars, taking courses, and the like.

3. Service to the profession: participation in the activities of professional and related organizations and institutions, e.g., serving as an officer or committee member; editing publications; chairing sessions at conferences; serving as a referee for journal articles, an evaluator of grant applications, or an outside evaluator of an individual's scholarship or an institution's program; and similar activities.

4. Scholarly activity within the larger community: bringing one's expertise to bear on the needs of communities other than those of one's professional peers—this could include addressing the university, civic, or ecclesial communities, but must be based in one's scholarly or professional expertise, in our case, as theology department members. (Activity that is not related to scholarly or professional expertise is also relevant to the University's mission and therefore to the evaluation of faculty, but as service rather than scholarship.) The theologian differs from other faculty members in having a commitment to *scholarly activity within the community of the Church* as well as that of the academy, a commitment that is intrinsic to our discipline. The theologian has an "ecclesial vocation," as Pope John Paul II said; to be a theologian is to exercise a role of "faith seeking understanding" within and for the Church. (In accordance with our standing as a department of Catholic theology within a Catholic university, "Church" here primarily means the Catholic community, although for individual theologians, depending on their personal and professional situations, activity might be appropriately directed to the other Christian churches, with which the Catholic church has a real though imperfect communion, or to ecumenical endeavors among Christians, or to interfaith activities among Christians and those of other religions.) Without overriding the need for validation of scholarship by disciplinary peers, scholarly activity within the Church (even though usually not peer-reviewed) should also be considered in the evaluation of a theology department member's scholarship. Such activity might include participation on church theological commissions and advisory boards (including school boards and hospital ethics boards); writings directed to general church audiences; lectures or workshops given to priests, religious, catechists, and parish audiences; in-service sessions for Catholic school and hospital personnel; and similar activities. This scholarly activity within the Church is particularly important in the evaluation of the scholarship of

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those who are specially set apart by ordination or religious profession for service to the Church.

Date	Signature
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