

January, 2007 - Dr. Andrea Bubka, Psychology

It has been my experience that the best way to become a good researcher (scholar) is the same way to become a good teacher—practice. That is, don't wait for the summer to work on a research project or every other year when a fellowship is awarded. Teaching and researching activities should co-exist. Teach in the morning, research in the afternoon. Teach on Tuesdays and Fridays and research on Mondays and Wednesdays. When researching becomes as common as teaching, it is easier to secure fellowships.

Researching and teaching often overlap. One way to continue research activities while teaching is to teach related seminars or research courses. Students like nothing better than for their professor to be an expert in the course he/she is teaching. Also, we are typically more enthusiastic about teaching topics related to our own research. This is also a great way to find student research assistants.

Sometimes professors enjoy engaging in the research activities, but when it comes to writing up the project for publication, they get stuck. Present research at conferences first before writing a paper for publication. Presenting at conferences typically involves submitting a short abstract and sometimes a longer abstract. These requirements are easier than writing the whole paper. Telling other researchers about your work is a real motivator. Others also provide valuable feedback that facilitates the writing process. One of the conferences that I attend is regional (Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore); every year, members of the Psychology Department along with our student research assistants present at this conference. Preparing and collaborating with the students facilitates the writing process. This is the ultimate hands-on experience for the students. This is another case of researching and teaching overlapping.

Some people think that teaching and researching are two separate entities; some professors are good teachers and some professors are good researchers. Ideally, professors should be both. Consider the examples presented above in which teaching and researching overlap. I know many professors that engage in research projects in the classroom and present at conferences, but they never complete the final steps, writing up the findings for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Instead they just consider themselves good teachers when they could/should be both. People, strangers, relatives, students have probably asked if you are a good teacher, but when was the last time someone asked you if you were a good researcher?