



The Formation of Scholars: Rethinking Doctoral Education for the Twenty-First Century

by George E. Walker, Chris M. Golde, Laura Jones, Andrea Conklin Bueschel, Pat Hutchings, (Jossey-Bass, 2008)

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“**D**octoral education is, by its nature, in the business of asking hard questions, pushing frontiers, and solving problems...” The envy of the world, American doctoral education is responsible for many of the world’s college and university faculty, leaders, and scholars. Given the important roles that many Ph.D.’s take, “asking hard questions and pushing frontiers” makes perfect sense. And, while I agree with this assertion, I believe a caveat must be offered. The pushing of frontiers and the asking of hard questions often comes at the price of unclear or even absent answers to the basic questions like, “what is the purpose of doctoral education?” If you are a faculty developer asking and facilitating the answers to similar fundamental questions on your campus, you will enjoy the symmetry in “*The Formation of Scholars: Rethinking Doctoral Education for the Twenty-First Century.*”

The book is based upon The Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate (CID), a five year action project sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The purpose of the CID was to seek answers to the fundamental question: ***What is the purpose of doctoral education?*** The CID examined six diverse academic disciplines that produce large numbers of Ph.D.’s: chemistry, education, English, history, mathematics, and neuroscience. The project asked academic departments across the country to reflect upon the ways they develop stewards of their disciplines, describe the rationale and purpose of the elements included in their curriculum, brainstorm ideas to improve the ways they accomplish those things, and assess the implementation of those ideas. The authors present the history of doctoral education in the U.S. and the accumulation of experiences and wisdom from the 84 participating departments across the country as they addressed the aforementioned questions.

The authors, all experts on doctoral education, weave personal and departmental stories of the work that was done on CID campuses and what the outcomes have been throughout the book. The models of reflection presented speak strongly to one of the central themes inherent in the book: graduate education is a joint endeavor between graduate departments, graduate faculty, and graduate students. In a particularly pointed chapter, “Apprenticeship Reconsidered,” the book outlines a plan to more completely align doctoral programs to its desired goals while incorporating what is already known about facilitating learning. Chapter subheadings on intentionality, multiple relationships, collective responsibility, recognition, and respect, trust, and reciprocity frame the necessary components of a mutually-beneficial apprenticeship model.

The CID was a large, well-done collaborative project. While not a how-to book, “*The Formation of Scholars*” shares the collective wisdom that successful doctoral programs strive to take the time and energy to address some of the larger educational questions in addition to their own important disciplinary questions. The authors recognizes that not all doctoral students are the same, advocating that both faculty mentors and doctoral students adapt the way they interact. They astutely point out that this can be done through “interactive reflection and openness to input and feedback.” Other insights include clearly communicating, especially when it comes to the expectations of our students, and providing regular, useful feedback.

The authors continue by overtly pointing out the importance of intentionally building and supporting intellectual community, going so far as to identify where this can be done. Following the chapter on intellectual community is “A Call to Action,” a chapter of suggestions for all the stakeholders in doctoral education, from the students and faculty, to the administrators and disciplines themselves.

Readers of the book will find that they have to get through a lot of background to get to the very important message in the last three chapters. Those new to higher education may find it disheartening that a prestigious group like the Carnegie Foundation needs to be present to have departments wrestle with basic questions from the learning research. We, as academics, often get so wrapped up in our own scholarship that we often forget the fundamental questions and their answers. Faculty developers will salivate at the last three chapters, recognizing the important roles they can play on their campuses by facilitating the discussions that “*The Formation of Scholars*” identifies as essential to the development of learning and the next disciplinary stewards in the doctoral programs at our own institutions.