

Overview

As those of us on the Thought & Action Review Panel were meeting this spring to review articles for future issues, the topic of our journal's identity came up.

All of, as panelists, had many interesting takes on Thought & Action's role and purpose. There was actually less agreement than we thought there would be.

Several panelists would like our readers to look to Thought & Action as a vehicle for shaping or even setting the agenda for higher education in this nation.

Others panelists see Thought & Action as a journal of new ideas on a wide range of topics related to the academy. Still others think of the journal as a venue for original research on the pressing concerns on higher education.

Typically, the panel didn't reach consensus on the question of our identity. We seldom, truth be told, reach easy consensus on any of the article submissions before us.

But one aspect of Thought & Action's identity is clear and shared by us all. And this aspect of our identity emerged from a readership survey of NEA higher education members conducted last fall.

In no uncertain terms, NEA members said they want to read articles that will help them do their jobs better.

We've tried to make sure that

this edition of the journal does just that: provide articles on quality in instruction that higher ed faculty and staff will be eager to read.

On that note, we're proud to publish in this issue the first-ever NEA Excellence in the Academy Art of Teaching Award essay, "Luther Tillman and a Walk Through Teaching."

Ronda Beaman's essay represents a new departure of sorts for Thought & Action. It's a reflection by an inspiring teacher, who traces the story of her professional growth against the backdrop of her everyday dealings with the world outside her office door.

In addition to Ronda's article, the Excellence in the Academy competition attracted a number of other excellent pieces that offer instructive insights into the teaching and learning process.

Sandra Feinstein, for instance, shared with us an essay that explains the heartening discoveries she made taking her Gothic literature class on the road in rural Kansas. In another compelling contribution, Peter Kiang writes of his efforts to infuse real multicultural reform into the education of future urban teachers in Boston.

Daniel Moses, an idealistic young history scholar, confronts the reality of the late 20th Century corporatized university. His musings on the widening chasm between his

own scholarship and bottom-line university management might cause many of us to remember what we set out to do in the academic life, what that life has become, and what we might do to restore the ideals of the academy.

In work of a more empirical bent, Greg Saltzman and Janet Grenzke report on faculty and staff attitudes and practices in academic governance. Also in the empirical vein, Gary Rhoades examines the impact of technology on academic unions. His work shows a decrease in employment in areas where unions are traditionally strong and growth in those areas where unions are traditionally weak.

Finally, we include John Magney's study of the factors that influenced faculty at Southern Illinois University Carbondale to choose unionization in an election held there in 1996.

This year, as part of our Excellence in the Academy competition, we are again offering a series of \$2,500 prizes for articles on the art of teaching and other aspects of life in academe.

The Art of Teaching award will recognize an article that describes an approach to teaching that inspires students with a love of learning or an article on practical approaches to improving teaching.

The NEA Democracy in Higher Education award reflects NEA's belief that higher education is instrumental in the development of a democratic society and that the academy should reflect this commitment to democracy in its own philosophy and practices.

Articles that reflect on the democratic traditions of the academy, examine the issues that affect this tradition—such as access, equity, diversity, tolerance, and affirmative action—are welcome in this category.

For the New Unionism in the Academy award, we are looking for theoretical and practical guides or reflections on partnerships between academic unions and institutions of higher learning that demonstrate a commitment to improving the quality of the educational experience for our students.

New scholars, those with less than seven years as instructors, are welcome to submit articles in any of the three categories for a special New Scholar award.

Our deadline for entries in all the categories is September 30, 1999, and we look forward to hearing from you. ■

— Jose Carmona
Thought & Action Review Panel