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The Academic's Dilemma: A Balanced and Integrated Career

ABSTRACT

The study of interpreting between American Sign Language (ASL) and English is a relatively new discipline linked to linguistics, communication, sociology, and studies of social interaction. Scholarship is key in this “academization.” The dramatic increase in ASL/English interpreter education programs in institutions of higher education across the United States requires instructors who can succeed in the academy, which often means completing doctoral degrees and navigating through the tenure and promotion processes. As a “practice profession,” our constituencies expect us to interpret; as academics our constituencies expect us to teach and conduct research. In this chapter I address the challenges faced in the academy—teaching, practice, and research—and reflect on a balanced and integrated career for interpreter educators making their way through this culture of teaching and learning.

A BALANCED and integrated career filled with intellectual stimulation, a continued sense of learning, respect and recognition from colleagues and students, financial reward (one must be realistic), and a happy and fulfilled life—is this not what we all want?

I became a teacher because I enjoyed being a student but could not financially afford to be a perennial student; teaching seemed to be the next best thing. I could continue to read, learn, conduct research, interact with like-minded colleagues, influence the next passionate generation, and earn a living at the same time. That was what I wanted to do and, to a certain

extent, it is what I still strive to do. My life in the academy is a good one and I am afforded many opportunities to keep my energy flowing. The real challenges are how to organize my time, how to identify appropriate topics for research and writing, with whom to collaborate, and when to say “no.”

Legato’s classic “three-legged stool” (2006, 71) for a faculty member in higher education describes the three primary responsibilities: teaching, practice, and research. (Legato’s work specifically addresses physicians who teach in medical school, but the model applies to other disciplines, especially interpreting, regardless of the languages involved.) ASL/English interpreting has a history in teaching and practice. As we continue to move into higher education, we are coming to grips with the importance of research; it is “the heart of what [teaching in the academy] is all about” (Boyer 1990, 1). I strive to be a scholar and maintain a balance in my professional life; addressing these three responsibilities requires its own amount of time and attention.

As I approach my 30th year in higher education (seven years in a lecturer position at a major university in the American Southwest prior to the tenure-track position I now hold), I appreciate the opportunity to reflect upon the time and energy I have expended to arrive at the rank of full professor (which required one tenure portfolio and two promotion portfolios over the years) and the choices I have made along the way.

INTERPRETER EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPs) IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Where Are We Now?

Although the field of translation is a well-established, well-respected, and venerable area of academic inquiry, interpreting between American Sign Language (ASL) and English is a relatively new interdisciplinary area of academic study linked to a variety of disciplines such as linguistics, communication, sociology, and studies of social interaction. This is manifested in the qualifications for faculty positions in this discipline in institutions of higher education (IHEs); the required qualifications are not consistent.

The differences between typical two-year and four-year IHEs in the United States make the issues even cloudier. According to the U.S.

Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (2010),¹ there are 1,180,153 full-time faculty employed in four-year IHEs (colleges and universities) and 216,756 full-time faculty employed in two-year IHEs (most commonly called community colleges) in the United States.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) lists five categories of higher education institutions in the United States: category I, those that offer doctoral degrees; category IIA, that offer no higher than master's degrees; category IIB, that offer only baccalaureate degrees; category III, that offer only associate's degrees and have academic ranks for faculty; and category IV, that offer only associate's degrees and do not have any academic ranks for faculty (AAUP 2009, 45). Only the institutions in category I are considered research institutions, where faculty are expected to conduct and publish research for tenure and promotion. Other IHEs are often considered teaching institutions with the emphasis on effective teaching and scholarship associated with teaching and learning.

The tenure process at community colleges typically does not require the faculty member to publish articles or book—and therefore does not require research—although “evidence of good teaching” is required because that is the primary responsibility. “Most community colleges do offer some version of tenure—and it's often relatively easy to get. Unlike their counterparts at four-year institutions, who may be required to publish numerous articles and perhaps even a book to be considered for tenure, community-college faculty members have no such mandate” (Jenkins 2003, 1).

The advertisement for my current tenure-track position required a master's degree but I was only a few months away from completing my doctorate when I was hired. The level of research I was comfortable producing carried over into my pursuit of tenure. Coming from a huge state university where tenure-track positions required doctoral degrees, I was amazed at the number of faculty members in IEPs with master's degrees, but at that point in time most IEPs offered two-year degrees. Things have changed somewhat since then.

Today interpreter educator positions in four-year IHEs tend to indicate “doctoral degree preferred,” whereas other disciplines require that

1. Most recent data available.

candidates “must hold an earned PhD.” The doctoral degree serves two purposes: First, it produces faculty who are at the top of their knowledge base in their field, and second, it produces faculty (i.e., potential scholars) who can contribute to the research and body of writing in their specific area of expertise, moving the field—and hence the practice—forward. We bemoan the fact that there are too few qualified applicants with doctoral degrees but do little to advance the promise of those degrees. Higher education specifically for ASL/English interpreters is almost nonexistent. For example, in 2005, a graduate program was established at Boston’s Northeastern University: the master’s in interpreting pedagogy. It was a small online degree developed by leading interpreting educators and researchers but was eliminated after only a few years. Gallaudet University recently established a doctoral program in interpreting “designed to prepare interpreter educators and researchers” (Gallaudet University 2012); their master’s degree in interpretation is well established. In addition, two other programs have since been established. Western Oregon University (Monmouth) offers a master’s in interpreting studies online during the traditional academic year and onsite during the summer. The University of North Florida (Jacksonville) offers a similar blended approach for their master’s, which includes a partnership with a video relay service agency, an innovative collaboration. Yet, when we argue that there is no terminal degree in our field, we relegate our field to sit and wait for a PhD in ASL/English interpreting rather than embracing the varied seemingly tangential disciplines that are part of what interpreters need to know. Those who have already completed doctoral degrees in our field have a wide variety of expertise and knowledge: adult learning, communication, curriculum and instruction, education, and linguistics. The expertise we have gained from these disciplines has given us a broad view of our field, and we should continue to encourage our students to pursue such degrees.

Ninety-one IEPs² report a total of 367 faculty who teach interpreting courses; 103 of them (28%) are in tenured or tenure-track positions (Cokely and Winston 2008, 7). The challenge for us is to make our way through this culture of teaching and learning in a balanced and realistic

2. The Conference of Interpreter Educators, the professional organization for instructors in IEPs, reports a total of 130 IEPs in the United States.

way, but as latecomers to IHEs we are hard-pressed to catch up with the established disciplines of higher education.

Although no data could be found on this topic, in talking to numerous faculty in IHEs, there is a clear bias against online doctoral degrees. Many colleges and universities in the United States offer online coursework and degrees, but many in the academy see the online or distance doctoral degree as “less than” the traditional one. Perhaps this will change as more brick-and-mortar IHEs offer comparable online degrees.

Some would argue that we are still involved in an evolution from the early training programs that offered two-year degrees. This is often evident in how we designate interpreter *training* programs (ITPs) and interpreter *education* programs (IEPs). Indeed, my own program is housed in an IHE of technology that offers “career-oriented studies” rather than liberal arts. Most students here are accepted into an already-declared major, allowing little time for exploration and the typical liberal studies approach to courses. Although there is a definite shift toward four-year degrees (my program changed from two-year to four-year in 2001), there are still vestiges of the original training-program approach (i.e., two years or less) established in the 1970s when the first six federally funded programs offered “basic interpreter education” (Frishberg 1990, 13).³ The establishment of those original programs ushered in “a dramatic increase in the academic institutionalization of [teaching ASL], the language of the [American Deaf] Community (Cokely 2005, 14).”

By 1980, there were more than 50 colleges or universities in the United States that housed interpreter training programs (Cokely 2005, 14–15). In 2008, 91 IEPs participated in a national survey (out of a reported 130 IEPs) and 64 (70%) still offer two-year degrees and/or certificates of study (Cokely and Winston 2008, 4). Currently, 70% of our IEPs are housed in IHEs that fall into either category III or IV, where all faculty members are referred to as “instructors” or “professors” but in reality there is no distinction (AAUP 2009, 45).

3. The Rehabilitation Services Administration of the federal government funded the National Interpreter Training Consortium (NITC), which included six institutions: California State University, Northridge; Gallaudet College; New York University; St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute; Seattle Central Community College; and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, approximately 19% of full-time faculty at community colleges hold doctoral degrees, compared to almost 79% of full-time faculty at category I and IIA four-year colleges and universities (National Center for Educational Statistics 2004b). Because 70% of our IEPs are in community colleges, it seems clear that expectations for faculty are different in these two kinds of institutions.

The recent changes in the requirements for the national Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) certification process are having an impact on the preparation of interpreters. As of June 2012, RID requires a baccalaureate degree before one sits for certification; the degree need not be in interpreting. As a result, many of the two-year programs are exploring “two-plus-two” options with nearby four-year degree colleges/universities, are refocusing to offer degrees in ASL or Deaf studies, or are making the change to four-year interpreting degrees, although it is unclear how many will either close or adapt. Therefore, we are moving away from “training” programs that had a “distinctly vocational profile” (Pöchhacker 2004, 31), and we need faculty who can represent that discipline in the academy and address the slow “academization” (30) in our field. It is unclear how many two-year programs are really going to make the change.

This shift toward four-year degrees in IHEs requires qualified faculty members with terminal degrees: doctoral degrees in appropriate disciplines. Although this is normal for well-established disciplines, this is still new for faculty members in interpreting education. Typical faculty members in other disciplines are required to teach, publish, and provide service, most often in the form of committee work, to their departments and universities. As IEPs move from community colleges to universities—in established departments of linguistics, education, communication, modern languages—our faculty must be able to hold their own among their colleagues in the academy. Instructors hired in our early IEPs were well-respected interpreters who had experience in the day-to-day business of interpreting, may have achieved an undergraduate/graduate degree in a “related” field, but tended not to have doctoral degrees.

Cokely stated that the “pivotal 1972–1975 period” in ASL/English interpretation offered “activities that were mistaken for accomplishments” and “one is struck by the virtual absence of research” (2005, 18). Although reliable research in our field continues to be intermittent and sparse, there

is a nascent canon of work, mostly produced by those few individuals who have earned doctorates. Despite this, Pöchhacker (31–32) maintains that the United States is a “paragon” for education and research related to interpreting, especially the master’s degree program at Gallaudet University, which has “proved seminal to the promotion of research on sign language interpreting.” Be that as it may, the dearth of graduate programs in interpreting in the United States contributes to the production of interpreters who can practice the profession but who do not have the appropriate credentials to secure tenured employment in IHEs; consequently, they are not the scholars we desperately need to conduct research and move us forward. Our current undergraduate IEPs prepare students to interpret; employment is the goal, not graduate school nor research. The disconnect is clear. Perhaps what limits the growth of graduate programs is the question, Who would enroll in them? Another factor is that IHEs are hiring more part-time faculty, not only in our field but in general.

CHALLENGES FACED IN THE ACADEMY

Historically, full-time tenured faculty appointments constitute the core of an institution of higher education: “academics value tenure, and tenure remains the prototype of the ideal academic career” (Gappa et al. 2007, 54). Regardless of egalitarianism, there is a pecking order within the academy; the rights and responsibilities that come with tenure do not come with alternative appointments. Tenured faculty have the potential to move a discipline forward by conducting and disseminating research. The permanency connected with tenure can allow for a more balanced life; the pressure to prove oneself abates and the freedom to make choices increases. Academic freedom allows for creativity in teaching, for individuality in research, and for innovation in service.

In the 21st century, higher education in the United States and worldwide faces many important issues, including but not limited to intellectual property rights, national/international security, economic belt-tightening, and rising tuition rates. One of the primary issues in the United States is the changing demographics of the faculty: We know that 68% of all faculty appointments in the academy are non-tenure-track positions (AAUP n.d.). We know that 35% of full-time faculty members are in non-tenure-track

positions (Gappa et al. 2007, 66). And we know that in our institutions of higher education, there are 1.4 million full-time professionals who have instructional responsibilities. Only 47% (approximately 658,000) of them had faculty status and only 30% of those 47% (approximately 197,000) either had tenure or were on the tenure track (Knapp et al. 2009, 3). Regardless of which statistic one accepts, “the majority of faculty members teaching in American colleges and universities today are not on the tenure track” (Gappa et al. 2007, 82). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) believes that

Because faculty tenure is the only secure protection for academic freedom in teaching, research, and service, the declining percentage of tenured faculty means that academic freedom is increasingly at risk. Academic freedom is a fundamental characteristic of higher education, necessary to preserve an independent forum for free inquiry and expression, and essential to the mission of higher education to serve the common good. (AAUP 2003)

This move toward *contingent faculty*⁴ (sometimes labeled “alternative appointments,” a term that includes both part- and full-time faculty who are appointed off the tenure track) brings its own issues of working conditions and pay, but the requirements for achieving tenure are still quite stringent, allowing institutions of higher learning to become more selective—all the more reason for our signed language interpreting discipline to have faculty with doctoral degrees. The ranks of contingent faculty continue to grow and their working conditions continue to deteriorate. The contingent faculty members hired are overwhelmingly in long-established disciplines and departments where there are already a number of tenured/tenure-track faculty; the lament is strong in English, history, psychology, and so forth. However, interpreter educators have long been contingent faculty in a contingent discipline, with too few among us having attained

4. “The term ‘contingent faculty’ calls attention to the tenuous relationship between academic institutions and the part- and full-time non-tenure-track faculty members who teach in them. For example, teachers hired to teach one or two courses for a semester, experts or practitioners who are brought in to share their field experience, and whole departments of full-time non-tenure-track English composition instructors are all ‘contingent faculty’. The term includes adjuncts, who are generally compensated on a per-course or hourly basis, as well as full-time non-tenure-track faculty who receive a salary” (AAUP, n.d.).

tenure appointments. As stated previously, 72% of our IEP faculty are not tenured or in tenure-track positions. We do not have much research to support our pedagogical approaches, our curricula, or our course development. Although we are latecomers, there is still an important place for us. We need a core faculty who can contribute to the canon, who can set the standards for the field, who can contribute to the academy, and show that we are a discipline worthy of research and publication. A glaring example of the pitfalls is that all the faculty for the online degree offered at Northeastern University were contingent, which probably contributed to its demise.

The first hurdle we face is to earn the doctoral degrees that prepare us with a strong foundation in a discipline and a clear understanding of the rigors of research and publication. As of this writing, Gallaudet offers the only doctoral degree in interpreting, which is certainly a step forward for our field, but it is not necessarily the preferred degree for all our faculty of the future. There are many options, such as doctoral degrees in adult learning, curriculum, and linguistics. It is time we stop whining about the lack of terminal degrees in our field and raise our heads to see the many possibilities that could support our academization!

THE NEXT GENERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Academy

Given the move toward contingent or alternative faculty positions in the academy, it gives one pause to consider whether completing a doctoral degree is realistic. Who will replace the current tenured faculty in our IEPs and how can we ensure the future of our field? The love of learning is not enough in our world today, unless one is financially independent. Most of us need to ask what kind of job awaits after the doctoral degree. Life in the academy is not what it used to be: Everyone is expected to do more with less. Contingent faculty members are increasing while the number of tenure-track positions are decreasing at an alarming rate. If our field is to continue its march toward academization, research needs to be the heart of our work. However, at a recent webinar, directors of the three master's programs in the United States were asked about potential employment

for their graduates. The consensus was that earning such a degree would allow for advancement in nonacademic settings; teaching positions were not mentioned as the primary goal.

There has been a “vision of the ideal worker” in higher education for quite some time. “Ideal academic workers moved from their doctoral programs ... directly into tenure-track faculty positions” and they “dedicated themselves fully to their work, particularly during” the pretenure period. This mindset was true for the “middle-class white men” who composed the faculty in higher education “from approximately the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth” (Gappa et al. 2007, 26–27). Although the demographics of the academy have changed in recent years, this view remains. “One of the most significant demographic changes for faculty is the increasing presence of women”; in 2003, women were 44% of new faculty members, up from 20% in 1969 (59). In addition, “in 2003, for the first time, women earned 51% of all doctoral degrees awarded” (61).

ASL/English Interpreting

Gappa et al. (2007, 29) continue: “Although men and women alike are expressing concern about their personal lives [and the strain of balancing work/home], women in particular have a difficult time finding a satisfactory balance between home and work.” This seems to be of particular importance to our field, given that the majority of interpreters are women. The RID reports a total membership of 13,778; approximately 85% are females (personal correspondence, Erica White, January 25, 2010). The Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT; the professional organization for interpreter educators in the United States) reported 272 members in 2002–2003, 185 of whom responded to that year’s demographic survey. Of those 185 participants, 156 (84%) were female (CIT 2004, 1). (See table 1.) Is this part of the reason why we have so few scholars with doctoral degrees? Did the field of ASL/English interpreting miss out on the era of middle-class white men as a core group of scholars? The scales tipped in higher education in 2003, with more women earning doctoral degrees than men. The scales in our field tipped a long time ago toward women, but we have not kept pace with the trend in higher education. For the most part, our female educators, although a majority of the organization, do not have doctoral degrees.

Table 1. Conference of Interpreter Trainers 2002–2003, Demographic Survey

Total responses to survey	185	Percentage (%)
Female	156	84
Male	25	14
Members holding PhDs	20	11
Members holding MA/MS/Med	109	59
Members holding BA/BS	44	26
Members holding AA/AS	4	2
Members, "college in progress" (no indication which degree)	3	1

Unfortunately, given a few minutes, it is possible to name all those in our field who do have doctoral degrees. I daresay it would be impossible for an English professor at any American college or university to create a list of his/her peers in a comparable amount of time.

I have no data to explain why individuals—female or male—do not pursue doctoral degrees in our field, only anecdotal comments that are familiar to us all: high tuition, no local programs, family responsibilities, no future positions, etc. Many sacrifices need to be made by and for the doctoral student—family, financial, social; we have all made them and survived. I have yet to meet anyone in our field who regrets the degree and the opportunities it affords (although I am sure there is someone out there). We are, after all, in the business of education. What we, as a field, must address is how to encourage our next generation to pursue terminal degrees. Every single graduate with a doctorate leads us further in the academization process.

REFLECTIONS ON MY CAREER

Teaching

The first leg of that three-legged stool (teaching, practice, research), and the most important for me, is teaching: "For the truth is that teaching is frequently a gloriously messy pursuit in which surprise, shock, and risk are endemic" and "all teachers worth their salt regularly ask themselves

whether or not they are doing the right thing” (Brookfield 1990, 1–2). I work hard and enjoy the work immensely, but I also enjoy thinking about teaching, reflecting on what I do, mulling over my approach to a topic, and talking to like-minded colleagues about the paths we have chosen. My philosophy of teaching is straightforward, although it has evolved—thankfully—over the years. With time and experience, I have come to know that teaching is more about learning and thinking than about content. If I can just help my students understand how important it is for them to reflect upon their work—in both skill and content courses—then I have succeeded. I thoroughly enjoy interpreting between ASL and English and I enjoy the interaction the process requires. I want my students to become confident and comfortable so they, too, can enjoy the process.

I have experienced the gloriously messy pursuit; faculty who say they have not are not being honest with themselves. The challenges to grading have been few, but they drain my energy. The incidents of cheating have been sparse, thank goodness. The drama of many students’ lives is ongoing. I have questioned whether I help or hinder students’ success. I have been stung by remarks on course evaluations and I have been inspired by notes from current and former students. I have dreaded watching the recordings of student projects. I have basked in the successful presentations of final projects. A bumpy ride, indeed!

I continue to be challenged by keeping my courses interesting and up to date; it is sometimes difficult when I continue to teach the same course year after year, but that is what also inspires me to read and write. The issues in my class and the challenges with which my students struggle motivate me to seek out solutions and in-depth understanding of those struggles. One of the most rewarding aspects of my position is academic reading. I read and attend conferences with other like-minded faculty whose disciplines are far removed from mine but with whom I share a passion for teaching and learning. I read about what it takes to be a successful teacher, from how to organize successful groups to introspective works that challenge my life’s choices (Brookfield, Dewey, Freire, Palmer, McKeachie, Millis among others). I have found solace and stimulation for my teaching with colleagues in other IEPs around the country. Teaching and learning is not what I do; it is who I am.

Practice

In recent years, most interpreter educators and working interpreters have begun to call ourselves a “practice profession,”⁵ which involves practice of the actual work during the educational experience, attempting to claim our place among the fields of education, social work, law, and medicine by requiring practicum or internship opportunities. We also have begun to discuss the professional consultation and our concerns about confidentiality. This implies that the educator in an IEP needs to also be a practitioner. Our resemblance to the aforementioned professions is a bit murky. Not all law professors are practicing lawyers, nor are all medical professors practicing physicians. However, we believe if one is going to teach interpreting, one needs the bona fides, the ongoing practice, to give credibility in the classroom. We certainly have had definitive research from individuals who are not practicing interpreters, but those who do practice often have underlying and unmentioned doubts about the work of those who do not, perhaps because there is no clear connection to the Deaf community and to those interpreters who practice the profession on a regular basis. The other half of this practice approach to our profession is teaching; where do we practice that? More colleges and universities are offering opportunities for doctoral students to practice their teaching in those very programs (beyond the traditional responsibilities for the teaching assistants). This is an issue that the academy continues to face and that our field needs to acknowledge.

As we attempt to hire faculty with credentials to prepare them for success, we must also be cognizant of the fact that those faculty need to be practitioners in the interpreting community. Many of our early educators were successful and well-respected working interpreters, and as a field we still recognize the importance of that practice. It is imperative that our faculty continue to have contact with Deaf consumers. In fact, at a recent conference of the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada,⁶ it was quite clear that Deaf faculty and Deaf interpreters are finding their place in the field. The collaboration between hearing interpreters and

5. This has come to the fore most notably through the work of Robyn Dean and Robert Pollard in their demand-control research and publications.

6. Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada 2012 in Calgary, Alberta: Creativity and Collaboration.

these members of the Deaf community is an intellectual endeavor that reflects mutual respect.

Classroom instruction can then resonate with veracity; we understand the issues, not just from our distant past but from yesterday. If we experience the process of interpreting on a regular basis, we can share the successes and failures with students in an active, exciting way that transcends articles and in-class activities. If they cannot see our passion for the work, how can we expect them to be passionate? Observations allow for reality and integrity, the “wholeness ... [that] is integral to my selfhood” (Palmer 2007, 14). In reality, interpreting is about connections (video-relay interpreting notwithstanding). Interpreters tend to be people who are about the connections with individuals. What better way to contemplate our interactions than interpreting and facing the challenges of those interactions on a regular basis? What better way to connect with students than to have them observe our work and to see us face reality?

The practice of interpreting should inform our teaching. If we want thoughtful students, then reflection on our own work as interpreters is crucial. Palmer (2007, 30) asks, “How did it come to be that our main goal as academicians turned out to be performance?” We should not simply perform; we should share, reflect, and learn while teaching. For me, the best way to continue to learn about interpreting is to practice it on a regular basis. After all these years as an interpreter, I continue to find events and/or interactions that challenge my thinking. I continue to reflect on the work I render and the decisions I make. Interpreting keeps all of us honest and connected to the community, engendering credibility among consumers and colleagues (i.e., working interpreters). Does our teaching reflect our experiences? Are discussions in an ethics course grounded in reality? A cursory review of current job listings for faculty in IEPs shows that, if not required, then at minimum “preference will be given” to applicants with certification from the national professional organization in the United States, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), indicating the importance of experience in the field. There is no data available on this concept, but conventional wisdom indicates this is *de rigueur* for our faculty.

This is where the issue of time rears its head. When pressed to consider priorities, how does one account for the time involved in accepting interpreting assignments? When one is preparing a tenure portfolio, into

which category does this activity fall: scholarship, professional activities, service to the institute, or service to the community? Will a tenure-review committee understand the importance of this activity? If we present it as important, then the tenure committee will probably see it the same way. If our interpreting informs our teaching, then it is vital to our portfolio.

Before the onset of video-relay interpreting, my institution was purported to be the largest employer of signed language interpreters in the world; there are more than 100 full-time interpreters on our campus and numerous other part-time or freelance interpreters. I have often interpreted classes in the evenings after my faculty responsibilities were fulfilled. I am fortunate because these assignments were usually within walking distance of my office, but they still required time. This work serves to keep me humble, to remember what a challenge it can be, and to show my students that my in-class self is not "performance" but real. If appropriate permission is granted, they come to observe me and see a completely different side of me. It is not my class and I am subordinate to an unknown faculty member who may or may not share my approach to teaching. At that point, I am not a faculty member; I am an interpreter whose primary goal is successful communication between individuals who are not using the same language. Oh, what discussions I have with my students! The underclassmen see me interact with Deaf consumers, being "personable but not personal" (Witter-Merithew 1982, 12). The upperclassmen can see how I, too, struggle with complicated classifiers, how I need time to comprehend the signs and fingerspelling before I attempt to voice in English, and how I handle my mistakes. Sometimes they take a turn interpreting and everyone revels in the experience, including the deaf consumers. This keeps my teaching grounded in reality and helps me understand my students' fears and emotions as they prepare for their future. These experiences also keep me grounded in the community of approximately 1,200 Deaf students we have on campus.

These experiences also have an impact on my teaching in both skills courses and content courses. For example, the small-group activities I use for my ethics class come from dilemmas I experience when interpreting on campus. I use my role as instructor, with which my students are familiar, to illuminate my role as interpreter. This is often a good place to begin our discussion because my students' peers (i.e., the Deaf students on campus) will one day become their consumers.

Research

The third leg of that academic stool is research (again, historically viewed as the most important); publish or perish still holds true. Tenure-track positions at category I IHEs require research, regardless of how it is defined. (See Boyer 1997 for an excellent discussion of the four elements of scholarship.)

Published research (i.e., scholarly work) is the foundation of a discipline. It should inform our curriculum and our approach to teaching. For lack of a better term, we have “flown by the seat of our pants” far too long. We need research to give us credibility, but I have no answers for how to increase the research we produce. Our field has pseudoscholars who present workshops not grounded in theory and who pontificate their point of view without sufficient knowledge of the discipline. We also have one-shot scholars (as does every discipline) who produce research, earn a degree, and then settle into an academic rut. Unfortunately, we all too often assume that if something is in print, it is indisputable.

Perhaps this is because we are a relatively young and small field of study, and we are not *expected* to be scholars. We have neither the history nor the credibility of many other disciplines, and we have so few faculty with terminal degrees that the academy seems to view us as special and therefore does not impose the same rigor on our faculty or afford us the same status when establishing new programs and positions. This is not where I want us to be.

Although teaching is my primary activity, I am expected to “engage in significant scholarship as measured by external disciplinary and professional standards as acknowledged by department and program practices of faculty review.” Our tenured and tenure-track faculty are expected to engage in scholarly work and to disseminate their work by the normal means; ultimately, the goal of this scholarship is to “enhance the education of our students” (Rochester Institute of Technology [RIT] 2006). There is much flexibility in our definition of research because we are an institute of higher learning that includes a variety of technical disciplines ranging from our School of American Crafts, to our College of Science, to our College of Business. However, it is quite clear to all that scholarship is important. When I began my career here at RIT, I knew the first thing I had

to do was publish an article from my dissertation, something expected by my dissertation advisor. My involvement with and my knowledge of my professional organizations gave me a built-in audience. I published several articles from the dissertation, including Monikowski 1995a and 1995b, and also was invited to present the information at several national conferences. These venues also introduced me to those in my field who conducted research and were forward-thinking leaders. Given my understanding of the march toward tenure, I welcomed the opportunities that my newly minted “paper” afforded me.

In my career, I have produced at least one publication per year, in addition to completing refereed presentations for my peers and workshops for working interpreters. My scholarship includes book reviews (I relish the opportunity to keep current: Monikowski 1996, 2001, 2004), primary authorship (language acquisition, my favorite: Monikowski 2005), secondary authorship (finding someone to write with—when it works—is a treat: Monikowski and Winston 2011, Monikowski and Peterson 2005, Winston and Monikowski 2004), collaborative presentations, data collection, reports on special projects and/or innovative curriculum, linguistic analysis of ASL, and research with my undergraduate students—Herrera, Orr, Williams, and Monikowski⁷—fairly typical for a faculty member in the humanities.

I also look to my teaching to guide my research. Technology and the explosion of using computers to enhance coursework led me to meet several colleagues not in my department but at my greater institution, which then led to other possibilities. Online courses and programs in ASL/English interpreting are quite common today, but when I first began in this tenure-track position, there was nothing. I had the good fortune to participate in a project that delivered professional development to educational interpreters living in rural areas of the Midwest.

I also seek out colleagues who are more experienced, more involved in research, more knowledgeable about a topic, and more energized than I am. Interacting with those people keeps me excited and challenged; I do

7. Such as a refereed presentation, “Educational interpreting: Insights from the field,” presented at the New York State Educational Support Service Personnel Conference, Niagara Falls, NY, May 5, 2007, with my students Denise Herrera, Emily Orr, and Courtney Williams.

my best work when I know the bar is set high. I become excited to learn what they know and to think about things from their perspective. Because one of the reasons I wanted to secure a position as a faculty member in higher education was that I enjoyed learning, as I began my tenure-track career I sought out those who were “more.”

One last comment about research and the doctoral degree. We do have—as does every discipline in every institution of higher learning—faculty with doctorates who see the degree as an end, rather than as a beginning, and the attainment of tenure represents the opportunity to ease up on the work. Certainly, the mere attainment of a doctoral degree does not prove anything; the passion and the desire to teach and to learn supersedes any degree. I have no solution for these individuals and neither, it seems, does anyone else in the academy, but I seek to align myself with faculty who motivate students and maintain a level of scholarship that ethically represents teaching and learning.

MY BALANCED LIFE

The Doctoral Degree: Entry Into the Academy

As stated by Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, and Beach (2006, 106), “The greatest complaint voiced by new faculty is lack of time—being overwhelmed by multiple responsibilities” and even experienced faculty members who are tenured point to not having “enough time to do my work” as a top complaint. Full-time faculty work approximately 53 hours a week with 58% of that time devoted to teaching, 20% to research, and almost 21% to “other” (U.S. Department of Education NCES 2008). These data are culled from 681,000 full-time faculty across 6,700 two- and four-year degree-granting institutions in the United States. We bring work home; we read students’ papers on Sunday afternoon; we grade tests at midnight and at dawn. Despite this heavy burden, a substantial number of doctoral degrees are awarded annually: “U.S. academic institutions awarded 48,802 research doctorate degrees in 2008, the sixth consecutive annual increase in U.S. doctoral awards and the highest number ever reported” (National Science Foundation 2009). I assume many of these individuals plan to seek positions in the academy. Why are there so few seeking work in the field of

ASL/English interpreting? What mindset allows us to think we can continue to hire faculty who are not comparable to those in other fields and still think we are a true profession? How long are we to be mired in the academization process before we are ostracized by the academy? Conventional wisdom offers two thoughts to ponder: If one's dissertation is not completed within three years of the approved proposal, it will not be completed, and approximately 85% of candidates who have completed all required course work for the degree but not yet begun the dissertation never complete the dissertation. Across all disciplines more than 48,000 doctoral degrees were completed in 2008.

For four years (2005–2008) I was the coordinator for new faculty in my college; this included all new hires in a variety of academic departments, not just those in my own department. Each fall, approximately twelve new hires arrived (two or three tenure track, nine or ten contingent of one kind or another). My primary responsibility focused on those in the tenure-track positions: help them get settled, establish priorities, become familiar with the university resources, and begin a plan for tenure. Administrators told me it costs more than \$2 million (including benefits) for a tenured faculty member, from hiring to retiring—a substantial investment. Many IHEs have some kind of entity that offers support for the new hires, including professional development opportunities, teaching and learning centers, mentoring experiences. In addition, more and more doctoral programs, not in education, are offering graduate students who work as teaching or graduate assistants a variety of experiences to develop their teaching skills. This helps those who are focusing on their content areas to consider a variety of pedagogical issues that can better prepare them for tenure-track positions in IHEs; topics may include how to develop a course, assess student work, etc. Faculty development is a growing field that addresses those already in the academy but also those just entering. Membership in the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD Network), established in 1974, continues to increase every year. Numerous other organizations recognize the importance that faculty development plays in “promoting and disseminating effective educational practices” (Sorcinelli et al. 2006, xiv). The support this field offers to faculty also helps to promote scholarly work that Boyer (1990) discussed, a broader approach to research that recognizes the importance of successful teaching.

My dilemma was that we hired faculty members who had neither doctoral degrees nor experience teaching in higher education. Attempting to mentor individuals without some kind of underlying philosophical structure was quite challenging. I see a difference between content knowledge and ability to teach. Unfortunately, because there are so few individuals who are truly prepared, we are left to teach them how to teach. Certainly, a new teacher needs time and support to become successful, but most doctoral programs offer students the opportunity to gain knowledge about content (be it curriculum, learning styles, whatever) so the actual practice of teaching can become the focus of those first few years. I am at a loss to understand how an inexperienced faculty member without a doctoral degree can hope to earn tenure in either a category I or II IHE; he/she would be truly exceptional.

In our field we make too many exceptions and delude ourselves into thinking that our faculty are more qualified than their degrees indicate. Attend our professional conferences and you will find presentations in the program that purport to be research when in reality they simply represent data collection, lacking any analysis. Or worse, presentations are offered that represent an individual's opinion with no supporting literature or research. More than forty years after the establishment of those original IEPs, we still mistake "activities for accomplishment." Unfortunately, this does not earn us the respect we need from other members of the academy. This puts us on unequal footing and makes collegiality within the IHE difficult. Gappa et al. already reported that "the lack of collegiality that some tenure-track faculty now experience" is a challenge for new faculty (2007, 78). "Good teaching requires collegiality" (Rice 2000, 15). Lacking the standard doctoral degree is one more barrier to that collegiality.

Tenure and Promotion

My current university has a very clear set of guidelines for tenure and promotion. When I interviewed for an assistant professor position, I inquired about the process and was immediately presented with several documents on policies and procedures for tenure and promotion; I found that very heartening. The process was not easy, but it was quite clear. It was not a checklist but it offered enough information to help me understand what

was expected. From my date of hire, I knew I would achieve tenure and I developed a plan that would take me there. Those first few years required a discipline that mirrored the work I did during my doctoral program; I sacrificed many Sunday afternoons trying to stay ahead of the work but I also enjoyed the process. It was what I wanted to do and I was happy to be doing it. I had always wanted to teach; my undergraduate work prepared me to teach high school English but that never happened. Along the way, my interest and experiences in signed language interpreting focused my studies on linguistics and education because I thought I could help interpreters learn how to be more successful.

I sought out tenured faculty to learn about their experiences and developed a five-year plan that would lead to a successful tenure review. My IHE requires an annual plan of work every fall and an annual appraisal at the end of the academic year; each faculty member reflects on his/her work in four areas: (1) primary area of responsibility; (2) professional development and communication plan; (3) professional activities and scholarship; and (4) campus and community service. Consequently, every fall I develop an overarching plan for the year, itemizing possible activities, committees, opportunities for service, etc. At the end of the academic year, I reflect on my plan and then write a review of how well I think I accomplished that plan. It is not meant to be a simple checklist; the act of reflecting upon one's year is important because next year's plan needs to include a continuation of one's goals. This is the importance of a long-term plan. When it was time for the actual tenure review process, the committee wanted to see how I documented evidence of "tenurability": "the major criterion for awarding tenure should be excellence in his/her primary area of professional responsibility" (Rochester Institute of Technology 2006, 5).⁸ Excellence in teaching is an elusive target, and hence the importance of a comprehensive plan that includes a philosophy of teaching that evolves with experience. I needed to reflect on my daily work and show how I attempted to improve the areas of weakness and develop my strengths. Preparing my portfolio for the tenure committee was made easier because of my annual appraisal documents.

8. Unfortunately, a lot of this documentation is done to stave off lawsuits in the event that an individual is denied tenure, but for many department chairpersons, it really is seen as an important part of one's growth.

The promotion process was also quite clear, although again not easy. When I earned tenure, my IHE did not automatically include promotion from assistant to associate professor (this has since been changed). The promotion process to full professor will continue to be separate, continue to recognize the candidate as one who shows “evidence of superior performance in his/her academic and professional qualifications” and who is recognized “as a role model in the primary area(s) of job responsibility and demonstrate outstanding professional accomplishments and service within and outside” our IHE (Rochester Institute of Technology 2007, 13–14). One must truly demonstrate leadership in a variety of areas, most notably one’s primary area of responsibility within our IHE and in the greater domain of one’s area of expertise. Even after one is promoted to full professor, annual appraisals are used by administrators to determine merit pay increases.

Life’s Pleasures

There is a rhythm to the academic calendar, and learning how to manage its ebb and flow is important. Autumn holds all the promise and hope of new students, new classes, and new projects. It also includes anxiety about the unknown—a change in administration, perhaps, or curriculum revision, or a different office. The excitement I experience always brings me back to my childhood and those days of new pencils and new books. The depth of winter in this area is quite remarkable and spring often comes later than in other parts of the country; everyone’s energy wanes. Then graduation day arrives and we all celebrate our students’ achievements. The years fly by and the work continues, unceasingly it seems at times. Because of this, it is even more important to attend to oneself and one’s personal needs.

My time away from work is special to me; my husband, my family, and my friends support me and give me great joy. My exercise time is important to me and I am careful to guard it because it keeps me happy and healthy. These forays into the real world energize me to return to my daily tasks. A side note ... during my doctoral program, every once in a while, my advisor could not be found in his office or in the student union or in the library. I later learned that he would disappear—to the movie theater in the middle of the day. It was his escape and now, having experienced some of what he

experienced, I think of him and although I do not go to the movies, I do escape.

To the uninitiated, working in the academy affords “summers off” (you can hear the envy when you talk to friends and family in the business world). The scholar knows that is not true. Summer is a time to write the articles, plan for the presentations, and read the journals that have accumulated during the academic year. Those days do have a different energy and need to be enjoyed because the ability to refresh oneself is important, but sometimes it comes from presenting at a conference where you meet energetic colleagues who stimulate your thinking. Sometimes it comes from participating in a campus workshop for new faculty, and sometimes it comes from an early morning bicycle ride along the canal with the love of your life!

Perhaps the lament about “time” should be balanced with an understanding of the importance of “time management.” A balanced life is a healthy and happy life; there is time for family and friends, time for exercise, and time for rejuvenation and relaxation. In many ways, my work is not compartmentalized into a “job”; it is a huge part of my life and it is who I am. Occasionally, I relegate some things to the far corners of my mind because I would rather play, but I always return to my life in the academy. Thomas Jefferson said it best: “I cannot live without my books” (Cappon 1998, 441).

CONCLUSION

I cannot snap my fingers and create a critical mass of individuals who have doctoral degrees in disciplines that complement the field of ASL/English interpreting. I do have serious concerns about the future of our field, of *my* field. My colleague Rico Peterson eloquently shares these concerns (personal correspondence, January 21, 2010):

Our field is a lovely mongrel of a thing. Mothered by necessity and fathered by chance we have made our way in the world mainly by pluck. Those of us who teach feel this, I think, most poignantly. We made it up as we went along. I remember that with nostalgia as I watch us continue to this day to make it up as we go along.

And we do continue to make it up. The establishment of interpreter *training* opportunities by companies that provide video-relay service

should cause us to question the value or benefit or usefulness of a four-year degree. It seems that we need to “produce” more “warm bodies” (i.e., interpreters) to fill positions, but where is the research that shows us how to produce more and *better*? In my heart, I believe that a well-rounded education is important if an interpreter is to be successful; a little bit of knowledge (i.e., a four-year degree) is not necessarily a dangerous thing—it can lead to lifelong learning and self-reflection. Students need to learn to think for themselves, but they also need guidance and a helpful perspective. We have not begun to explore mentoring for graduate students: Do they even think about pursuing doctoral degrees? Do they even know it is a possibility? Do they think about it but are clueless on how to pursue such a dream? It is incumbent upon us to accept this “senior faculty” responsibility.

I wonder whether some of my undergraduate students will one day take my place at the front of the classroom to experience the excitement of teaching and learning that I so enjoy. Over the years, a few of my students have gone on to pursue master’s degrees, although the preferred discipline seems to be Deaf education. One former student completed a doctoral degree and is an assistant professor of linguistics at a large state university. Two others are in the doctoral program at my alma mater.

I said I became a teacher because I really wanted to be a perennial student. I have told my students this; some seem fascinated to imagine this for themselves. Those students are my future, our future.

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