

The Stetson Teacher-Scholar¹

Stetson strives to attract outstanding faculty, deeply committed to our disciplines as means of enhancing understanding of the human condition and the world. As teachers, scholars, and mentors, we model the scholarly practices and intellectual values we seek to impart to students. In those roles, faculty take joy in the process of inquiry and in sharing our knowledge with others. As active members of the academy, Stetson faculty participate in (inter)disciplinary scholarship and creative practice that keep us current and enlarge the intellectual and practical opportunities available to students.

Stetson faculty believe that scholarship is the foundation of teaching. The hyphen between “teacher” and “scholar” expresses a significant linkage: scholarship and creative endeavors keep us current, connect us to wider worlds, and remind us that we share with our students the learner's experience of mastering new material, meeting with resistance or rebuffs, receiving and responding to criticism, and communicating effectively to different audiences. The scholarly and professional activities of faculty connect us to communities beyond our campus, encourage continued intellectual development, contribute to the body of knowledge and wisdom, and renew our enthusiasm to engage students in critical inquiry.

Although classrooms, laboratories, and studios are the primary focal points of intellectual community at Stetson, scholarly inquiry extends beyond these environments. As teacher-scholars, the faculty are committed to improving the content and pedagogy of our teaching. By developing classroom environments in which all persons are respected and informed engagement is valued, faculty challenge students to develop the skills necessary to understand complex problems and begin to address them. Simply stated, the classroom is where education begins. Faculty also model for students the practice of an engaged learning that extends beyond the classroom, and those endeavors take many distinctive disciplinary forms.

The faculty's ability to model intellectual engagement is based on our intentional and continual development as scholars and creative artists. While we share common goals, we possess distinctive gifts, skills, training, perspectives, and approaches that enrich the academic community. The university recognizes and values the differences between individual faculty members and encourages each to grow and develop as a teacher-scholar. Thus, the Stetson faculty reflect the comprehensive nature of the institution and the variety of our disciplines: we are scholars, mentors, philosophers, theoreticians, researchers, artists, writers, educators, and professional practitioners.

Therefore, Stetson defines as “professional” any activity involving the serious practice of disciplinary expertise. Scholarship is essential to an intellectually vibrant and enriching community, and so it represents the most fundamental form of professional activity. But

¹ This statement is influenced by and at points draws explicitly the similar statements produced at Elon University (<http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/teasch.xhtml>) and Washington and Lee University (<http://www.wlu.edu/presidents-office/articles-and-opinion-pieces/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-teacher-scholar>). The Stetson Tenure & Promotion Policy (<http://www.stetson.edu/administration/provost/media/t&P/tenure-and-promotion-policy.pdf>) articulates our sense of the specific forms of scholarly / creative work and its attendant products.

scholarship is also a creative process of inquiry and exploration, adding to the knowledge or appreciation of disciplinary or interdisciplinary understanding. It is the serious exercise of what is being taught in the education of students: clear goal-setting, adequate preparation, intense inquiry, and critical reflection. Stetson University encourages and recognizes a broad array of scholarly endeavors just as it has adopted a broad view of faculty engagement with students. Scholarship adds significantly to our understanding by: 1) discovering or uncovering new knowledge or insights, 2) generating new theories and techniques that guide discovery, 3) integrating knowledge within or across disciplines, 4) applying knowledge responsibly to solve problems, and 5) developing pedagogical innovations that facilitate the dissemination of knowledge.

We value distinctly different types of scholarly activities, both within and between disciplines. However, across all disciplines, recognized scholarly work shares some common features:

- It results in a product shared with others: a presentation, exhibition, or performance that expands knowledge, skills, or understanding.
- It reaches beyond the institution, often garnering national or international recognition.
- It develops and/or expands the expertise of the faculty member and lifts the faculty member's standing within the institution and the professional community.
- It is reviewed by appropriately qualified experts outside the institution.

Hence, while we celebrate and facilitate the integration of teaching and scholarship, we also recognize that good research and writing sometimes involve travel, solitude, or collaboration with distant colleagues. And so we provide and continually seek to enhance travel support, (summer) research stipends, sabbatical opportunities, course reassignments for scholarly and creative work (reduced teaching load), and assistance in securing outside funding for worthy projects, along the lines of our peer institutions.² Our ideal is not the merger of teaching and scholarship, but the smooth transition between periods of time that, for good reasons, emphasize one or the other. We recognize and emphasize the support that new faculty require to begin their integration of full-time teaching with ongoing creative or research work, and the support that established faculty require as they undertake new creative, scholarly, and pedagogical endeavors.

Stetson University is a rich intellectual community committed to providing a dynamic and challenging curriculum that emphasizes learning across the disciplines and encourages students to put knowledge into practice. Faculty model a life of learning through our engagement with students and our scholarly accomplishments. As a part of a vibrant academic community, we share with our students the joy of mental, physical, and spiritual transformation, guiding them to become informed and caring citizens of the global community.

² Per our peer institutions. See the available resources, opportunities and goals, for example, at Elon (<http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/administration/president/strategicplan2020/Progress%20update%2012.08.2011.pdf>) and Puget Sound (<http://www.pugetsound.edu/gateways/faculty-staff/faculty-professional-developme/>), among others.