

Stephen Snyder
Statement on Research, Teaching and Service
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In my five years at Lehigh I have committed myself fully to the roles of a faculty member – research, teaching, service, and committed myself to the education of our students. In the course of many and varied activities, I have had a tendency to work on many projects, maybe too many. Still, I am first author on a paper in RESTAT, I have one published paper in outcomes research and another under review, a number of working papers which I feel confident will find publication in good journals, projects in various stages of completion, and a small but distinguished collection of rejection letters. I have spent substantial time and effort on my research, and believe publications will result in time.

Research:

I currently have two articles on submission, one at Health Care Analysis, the other at the Journal of Human Resources. A third paper will be submitted to Economics and Human Biology when the bibliography has been updated. I have two posters that have been turned into working papers, and the results of some experimental work to write up as a working paper. My interests are broad, my research agenda reflects this breadth, but there is a temptation to lose focus. Most of my research is in the area of health economics, but this is a fairly broad area today. I have substantial work on the long-term effect of health shocks. One piece of this was published in RESTAT. Two working papers (at Journal of Human Resources and going to Economics and Human Biology) belong to this stream. The growth and revision in these articles came about through the comments of seminar participants and referees, but this has been a long, slow process. My paper (with Bill Evans) in RESTAT has generated a certain amount of interest; it has been cited in a number of other published papers and additional working papers.

Another area of research has been the interdependence of marketing and R&D at pharmaceutical companies. This area is still health economics, but the literatures are almost entirely distinct. Keeping current in both areas has been a challenge. Two papers

in this area strike readers as interesting, but the theoretical paper (with Art King) currently applies only to a monopolist, and we have not successfully solved a realistic duopoly model. The empirical paper has jumped ahead because the results are strong. These papers have been presented as posters at outcomes research conferences where they have elicited a certain amount of interest because they suggest alternative means of regulating pharmaceutical company behavior. I cannot claim to have moved public policy in this arena yet, but a deeper understanding of how different functions of modern corporations are linked will be a continuing interest.

My third area of interest has been institutions and long term economic growth. I have written two book reviews of major books in this area, and consider this a contribution to an important scholarly conversation. Stimulated by reading in this area I have just completed an experiment on attitudes towards risk. This should become a submitted paper in the next six months. Again, long-term economic growth is another distinct literature.

I consider all my research interests related. The sources of sustained economic growth are what concerns economists back to Smith and Quesnay. Improved health is perhaps the most important outcome of that growth. Health happens because organizations arise to develop new knowledge. We get the kind of organizations our institutions encourage. It all makes sense, but it is a lot of ground for one assistant professor to cover. So I work in health-demographic economics and health-industrial organization economics. I do a little health outcomes research. I do some economic history. I am second author in a working paper on inheritance taxes. Editors tell me I write thoughtful, detailed referee reports. But I have not specialized enough to be in the regular rotation for conferences and seminars. In 2009, I am just beginning to feel that I understand the research enterprise and how to find my place in it. When I began graduate school in economics other students would ask me what led me back to school. I would answer, "I want to say something interesting." That is an ambitious goal, and one that takes a long time to achieve. It still seems to me a goal worth pursuing.

Looking ahead, I find the gap between models of health behavior and the empirics of health behavior a way to continue pursuing my research interests. What don't we know

about health that kills us? Why, for instance, is there so much seemingly random background variation in mortality rates? Why are those most at risk for chronic conditions not those most likely to take action to prevent disease? There is so much we do not understand.

Service:

Certainly, it is clear to me in a way I did not understand four years ago, why a junior researcher needs to hit singles before he or she swings for the fences. Scholarly service is related to scholarly achievement. The way an academic is recognized is through publishing in good journals. But acting as a referee also contributes to the scholarly enterprise. There are many journals and many manuscripts, and I enjoy reviewing papers. I write thorough reports, and get positive feedback on my detailed comments from editors, whatever the journal. This takes time, but there is a sense in which it is easier to improve a manuscript outside the circle of top journals, and I feel that when I commit to writing a report, I commit to taking the time to give the article a thoughtful reading, no matter what journal has requested my review.

As to other aspects of service, I have been a reviewer and judge for ISPOR at their annual meetings, but my impact has probably been greater in the Lehigh and Bethlehem communities. For the past two years I have been an active member of the Lehigh faculty's Graduate Research Committee, and in that role I have tried to be helpful to the University, but also to the department's Ph D. program. I have tried to make the Economics Department research seminar a positive contribution to the scholarly life of the department and the education of our Ph D. students. I am also on the board of the campus Hillel organization, and try to attend the student activities as my schedule permits. I am now in my third year on the board of the Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem. I serve on their Administrative Committee and have been charged with writing a strategic plan for an organization that needs to seriously contemplate its direction. This has required a substantial commitment of time, but even more of creative energy. In retrospect, accepting this responsibility was, in terms of my research productivity, unwise. However, this has been an opportunity to do real service, to help an organization match its resources to its agenda. I think I have played a useful

role in getting officers, staff and board members to step back from their daily activities and contemplate the direction of the community and the organization. In truth, there is a lot of opportunity for teaching economics to the board of a community organization, and the connection between teaching and action is gratifyingly near.

In summary, I am an active figure in the academic community, and I play a useful role in the local community. Lehigh encourages me to make a positive contribution. I have used this opportunity to the best of my ability. In coming years I would like to increase the visibility of health-related programs in the business school, particularly the master's degree in Health and Bio-Pharmaceutical Economics. Many clinicians have a business component to their work and would benefit from training that combines clinical and business study.

Teaching:

The principal role of a professor is to “profess,” and this activity accounts for the bulk of my time, the great preponderance during the school year. This past year I had three preparations, Eco 146, Eco 210 and Eco 425. During my time at Lehigh I have prepared all or substantial parts of six classes. I currently act as department coordinator for Eco 146. I have served on one dissertation committee, and am currently co-advisor to another Ph D. student. This is a comment I received on my teaching at the end of the Fall 2008 semester:

“Professor Snyder,

Thank you for a great semester. It really taught me to view things in a different light and that's definitely a good thing in these times ... I don't normally give this kind of flattery to teachers but you are by far my favorite professor at Lehigh and one of the best I've had in my educational career.”

Not all students feel this way, I am sure, but every semester I get one or two comments of this nature. Most are verbal, not written. I do not solicit them and feel awkward using them as advertisements for myself. The comments come from students who recognize that I put myself into my teaching, or students on whom I have had some influence outside the classroom. I have made many personal connections, and I thank Lehigh for the opportunity to do so. It is a major, intangible source of compensation. My failures in

the classroom are similar in kind to my failures in research, but with milder consequences. I am too spontaneous, too unstructured; I go in too many directions; I try to do too much. Largely, I think my students forgive me because they sense a real commitment behind my actions. I teach students as I would want my own children to be taught. I have strong beliefs about what students should learn from a course, which may not always be what the students want to learn. Life is messy and complex. I try to teach students to simplify a messy world so it is amenable to analysis, but to remember that their models do not capture the messiness. Because of this, the right model to use depends on the particular situation and the purpose of the analysis. Aside from the particular content of a class, there is a general process of education. I try to bring this into the classroom, but also to have contact with students outside the classroom. I go to some sort of faculty appreciation dinner virtually every semester. I require a short paper with several revisions in my Eco 146 class. I get students, and not typically the 'A' students to participate in an experiment outside class. This last is a lot of pure fun, more like play than work, but it takes planning and it takes time. I put substantial effort into being a good lecturer, but I also strive to be a good educator. I encourage students to integrate the education inside the classroom with education outside the classroom. I get enough comments such as the one above to make me feel I am successful.

A student of mine, Nathan Punwani, was awarded the Hamilton Prize for an innovative proposal in public policy. He gives me substantial credit for educating him in the area of his paper (health care – taught in what is essentially an economic history course). This is the kind of success I wish for, and certainly more than I in any sense deserve. Nathan gives me too much credit, but, yes, this is why I like being a professor.

Conclusion:

I very much appreciate these past five years at Lehigh. I have given my best to the life of a professor and the best interests of Lehigh's students. I feel I have given value for money to the students, and made a positive contribution to the Lehigh and Bethlehem communities. As a researcher, my interests focus on health issues and the pharmaceutical industry. I believe my efforts to improve our understanding in these areas will come to fruition, I only wish I could have moved more quickly towards this goal.