A Carnegie Foundation Report on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

THE ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING

BUILDING THE TEACHING COMMONS

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This book speaks to the conceptual nature of learning in higher education and expands upon practices and evaluations of such. As the title suggests, the philosophical construct is based off of Sir Francis Bacon's 1605 book of the same title. The main argument is that educators take various approaches to higher learning with a common goal. That common goal is to ensure that learning is communicated, absorbed, and sustained. The writers refer to the "commons" in which we collect and build upon the existing paradigms of knowledge. An educator's goal is to communicate the fundamental elements of a particular discipline along with previous and current research. Effective learning is demonstrated by students who are able to apply the concepts and expand upon current scholarship.

The book chronicles the successes of effective educators and their practices. The first chapter mentions the work of Dennis Jacobs who was a Chemistry professor at the University of Notre Dame. The introductory course in Chemistry in which he was teaching revealed that some students were struggling to apply the knowledge learned in the course to "real problem solving." He states that students are not "too dumb" to learn, they were simply ill-prepared in high school. If students cannot succeed in introductory courses they will likely move away from studies in that particular discipline which can be quite limiting to students who are discovering their individual interests and eventual future careers.

As with most disciplines, teaching in higher education requires scientific and scholarly advancement. The author proposes that teaching and learning has failed to do so until recently. The book leads a charge to educators to evaluate their work and effectiveness within higher education. The book challenges educators to participate in the teaching commons through scientific research and sharing their findings with the scholarly world.

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