Research Briefs

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Performing Professor

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Abstract

In this piece, the authors, two newly named Ph.D.'s and new tenure track faculty members, question life in the academy as they find themselves juggling what they think their new role should be and what the performance of that role actually is. Using a framework of autoethnography, their journaled experiences and performances are shared through dialogue with the intent that readers will gain an understanding of their evolving roles as performing professors. Dialogue was chosen as a means of re-representing the authors' personal narratives in order to illustrate the complexities and reflections of their new roles as assistant professors, including how they perform professor, validation of that performance, and their desire to perfect the performance, specifically with regard to teaching. The authors constructed this dialogue as a way of telling the story of their first-year experience and in doing so hope to open a space for more consideration and dialogue regarding performance and the professoriate.

Practical Application

Understanding the role faculty play in academia and what it takes to be a faculty member is increasingly more complex. In an effort to break down that complexity, it is important to reflect on academic transitions as key components of professional identity and transformation. This performance piece is intended to challenge readers to reconsider the still life perspective of academia by painting a new, more dynamic portrait of what it means to be a professor. Each of us came to understand through this autoethnographic project that being a professor is time intensive, and requires constant learning, reflection, and sacrifice. As we documented our transition between being doctoral candidates and working professors, we provided candid reflections and practical tips on what to expect during the first year as a faculty member, which provided a unique road map of sorts for becoming professors. Our hope is that "Performing Professor" will generate a dialogue between new faculty and tenured faculty regarding life in academia, what new faculty can expect, and the challenges they might face along with advice on how to navigate those challenges when they are presented.

Citation

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