

Ideas, Funding, and Positions: The Elements of a Successful Intellectual Movement, and the Role of Peter J. Boettke in Advancing Austrian Economics

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Abstract

The record of Peter J. Boettke's mentorship of PhD students in economics is particularly impressive, using the criteria of his former students' intellectual contributions, their success in obtaining funding for their activities, and their positions within academia. The record shows that Boettke has had unequalled success as a mentor of doctoral students in Austrian and Market Process economics.

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I. Introduction

There are numerous ways to evaluate mentors and their various styles and approaches. But perhaps the most important way to evaluate a mentor is in terms of students' career results. The quality of a mentor becomes obvious when a track record has been established and one can look at the success of his mentees. In the case of PhD advisors in economics, a mentor's track record is observed in the professional success of his students. By this standard, Pete Boettke has shown unique success among his peers at George Mason University and among professional Austrian-school economists.

Since coming to George Mason in 1997, Boettke has chaired 16 dissertations. Fourteen of those 16 advisees are currently teaching at colleges and universities, and the other two are affiliated with university-affiliated policy and research centers. Eleven of the 14 in teaching positions are currently on the tenure track. By now there are surely more, but as of this writing those students have produced *at least* 212 unique journal articles and seven academic books, four authored and three edited volumes. I know what you are thinking,

but even without Coyne and Leeson, the total is 153 unique journal articles and two academic books.

Peter Boettke has often emphasized the three key elements of a successful academic movement: ideas, funding, and positions. This chapter lays out his successes in advancing his advisees on all three fronts.

II. Ideas

The first and arguably most important component of an intellectual movement is the movement's intellectual contribution, particularly the published scholarship it generates. In this area, Boettke's former students seem to have been particularly successful and influential. The aggregate publications of Boettke's former students are given in Table 1.

Tenure-track academics at nearly all levels face a practical reality: peer-reviewed journal articles are their main measurable output, and are generally the most rewarded. By this standard alone, Boettke has been an unusually successful advisor and mentor. *Without double-counting co-authored articles*, Boettke's 16 former students (through 2009) have published 212 journal articles. Furthermore, the actual number could be slightly higher, as only published and forthcoming work was included, and the numbers in Table 1 are based on information gathered from his former students' CVs in March 2010. More up-to-date CVs would likely increase the total even higher. The numbers are extremely impressive for a group of academics so early in their careers. For example, Christopher Coyne, who is among the top publishers in this group of Boettke advisees, received his doctorate less than five years ago. In fact, as of this writing, nine of the 16 advisees are within five years of their graduation date, and 15 of the 16 graduated within the past 10 years.

As impressive as this record of journal articles is, Boettke's former students publish beyond traditional academic journals. As Table 1 indicates, his advisees also go on to make regular contributions to books, publish policy papers, write book reviews, and produce a variety of other writings, including op-eds. Four of Boettke's students, all within the past few years, have also authored books of their own, and others have edited academic volumes. Even more impressive are the academic publishers involved, which among others include the University of Chicago Press, Stanford University Press, Routledge, and Princeton University press.

Table 1. Intellectual Contributions

Journal Articles	Authored Books	Edited Volumes	Book Chapters	Book Reviews	Policy Papers/ Op-Eds/ Monographs/Etc.
212	5	4	55	40	75

Boettke has had great success in publishing, both in terms of contributions to academic journals as well as more popular outlets directed toward laymen. His students are no different, with both a high level of output and an ability to reach a wide variety of readers. Furthermore, in a relatively short period of time those students have been able to publish in fairly prestigious outlets, including top academic journals, books with top publishers, and popular publications in other highly distributed periodicals. There is no such thing as an intellectual movement that does not publish its intellectual contributions, and by the standard of publishing its ideas, Boettke's advisees themselves constitute a successful intellectual endeavor.

III. Funding

Boettke's record in the area of receiving grants and funding is extremely strong. All of his advisees have received fellowship support as doctoral students, and several have received grants and fellowships already as junior faculty. For example, Scott Beaulier and Peter Leeson are both BB&T Professors of Capitalism at their respective universities. Edward Stringham, Benjamin Powell, Scott Beaulier, and Stephen Miller all have successfully obtained Charles G. Koch Foundation grants to fund speaker series to enhance their courses and student programs. Benjamin Powell and Stephen Miller have both had Summer Faculty Fellowships from the American Institute for Economic Research. These examples only represent a portion of the support Boettke's former students have received, and in just the past few years they have collectively received millions of dollars in endowments and grant support. More recent advisees are likely to continue this trend as they make the transition from junior to senior faculty.

Boettke's greatest success in seeking funding has been in obtaining funding for graduate students to pay for their schooling, research, and professional development. But this emphasis on developing doctoral students has instilled an important habit among his former students as young professors. They do not merely

function within the constraints of department or college budgets, but rather recognize the importance of developing their student programs and research agendas; they have the drive, experience, and skills necessary to advance their academic goals and obtain the funding necessary to do so.

IV. Positions

An intellectual movement has no life without ideas, and it has no future without funding. But the placement of students in academia is equally important, because without academic placements a movement cannot grow. Students can be funded in graduate school, write dissertations and receive doctorates, but unless those students are placed as professors within the academy, where will a new, larger generation of students come from?

It is in this area that Boettke stands out the most as an advisor of graduate students at George Mason University and within the broader Austrian School/Market Process movement. Of the 16 Boettke advisees with conferred degrees between 1999 and 2009, all have university affiliations. Two are affiliated with university research centers, and the rest are teaching faculty. Of the 14 faculty, 11 are currently on the tenure track or are already tenured. Three are at PhD-granting institutions in economics, and several of the others are at schools with masters-level programs in economics. At least two (Beaulier and Miller) teach MBA students.

It is difficult to overstate the impact of these former students. Typically, a former student of Boettke's teaches hundreds of students a year and inspires several each year to pursue careers in public policy and academics. For example, in a very short period of time, former students of Stringham and Powell at San Jose State University have already obtained positions as faculty members; the most notable such example is David Skarbek (a Boettke advisee at GMU who will graduate this year), who has recently accepted a position in Duke University's Political Science Department.

The impact comes on two fronts: First, as mentioned, current students will become the next generation of academics and allow an intellectual movement to move forward and grow. Second, it is future professionals, employers, parents, policy-makers, local officials, civil servants, and pre-college educators who make up the bulk of the students professors teach every year. Those individuals' beliefs about economics will determine economic policy over the coming decades.

The academy, and its primary role of exposing those students to ideas, plays an important role in shaping and framing the public's economic beliefs. Without Boettke's success in placing students, Austrian Economics would have little growth in academia.

It is worth mentioning that Boettke's students have shown unusual success in two other key areas: matriculation and editorships. Of all Boettke students to have proposed a doctoral thesis, not one has failed to successfully defend a dissertation. This is worth noting because many advisors, although strong in other respects, generally do not possess Boettke's ability to motivate students to complete their doctoral work. And although it is sometimes possible to obtain a tenure-track position without a degree in hand, it is generally difficult now to succeed on the tenure track without eventually defending.

V. Conclusion

This chapter presented a record of Peter J. Boettke's mentorship of PhD students in economics using three criteria: their achievements in terms of 1) generating and publishing intellectual contributions, 2) securing funding for scholarship and student engagement, and 3) obtaining academic appointments and editorships. An objective look at the record shows that Boettke has had unequalled success as a mentor of doctoral students in Austrian and Market Process economics. Thus far, they have been unusually successful publishers, competent fundraisers, and extremely successful in the academic job market.