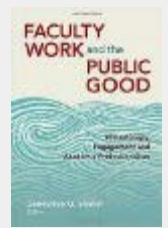


## Faculty Work and the Public Good: Philanthropy, Engagement, and Academic Professionalism

reviewed by Jessica Ostrow — October 21, 2015

**Title:** Faculty Work and the Public Good: Philanthropy, Engagement, and Academic Professionalism  
**Author(s):** Genevieve G. Shaker  
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Within the rapidly changing higher education landscape, *Faculty Work and the Public Good: Philanthropy, Engagement, and Academic Professionalism*, elucidates the philanthropic dimension of the contemporary faculty career. In this volume, scholars address the notion that in addition to teaching, research, and service, contributing to the public good by way of philanthropy is inherent in the fabric of the academic professorial career and as such, they advocate for its recognition as a dimension of faculty work. When people first think of professorial philanthropy, they may conjure images of faculty engaging in activities such as community service. Shaker takes a different stance, focusing on the element of the faculty role that serves the public good in its broadest form. Therefore, to illustrate this paradigm shift, Shaker reflects on her graduate advisor's philanthropic actions from which she benefited, including mentorship sessions, motivational meetings, one-on-one writing time, access to personal office space, introduction to personal contacts, and gifted books. Employing her personal experience as a springboard, Shaker argues that the faculty profession is "grounded in a responsibility to contribute to the public good. The expectation to meet society's needs for an educated citizenry and societal requirements to advance and disseminate knowledge lend a philanthropic component to the act of being a faculty member" (p. 11). Thus, Shaker asserts that the faculty profession is anchored in the responsibility to contribute to the public good, and amid growing demands of research productivity and increased pressure for student accountability, calls to both preserve and recognize the importance of faculty philanthropy.

Shaker reveals that this volume was conceived from the dearth of scholarship that explores this seemingly important topic, as the future of higher education rests upon the trajectory of faculty having the freedom to contribute to the public good within the space of their careers. Shaker also divulges that the definition of *philanthropy* in the study of higher education faculty lacks consistency and therefore, in her introductory chapter, she calls upon Robert Payton's definition to serve as the foundation for the volume. Payton (1988) defines *philanthropy* as "voluntary action for the public good" in the subtitle of his book, and this conception sheds light on a perspective of philanthropy that is fundamentally aligned with the innate nature of the concept itself, and with its relation with the professorial career. In a later chapter, Moody asserts that this definition "emphasizes the social benefits from, and moral intent of, philanthropy" (p. 20). The conversation about faculty and philanthropy is not an entirely new phenomenon, as Dewey (1916) wrote about this very topic. However, this volume does an excellent job at facilitating an innovative discussion about philanthropy and faculty work in contemporary society.

In this volume, 23 scholars contribute to 17 chapters that explore how faculty work contributes to the public good through empirical research, historical evidence, personal experience, and substantiated theory. Taken together, these chapters culminate in the portrayal of how philanthropic and academic work overlap within higher education contexts, including institutional type, disciplinary orientation, epistemological approach, and philosophical orientation. More specifically, Shaker organizes this volume into five sections, each containing up to five chapters.

Part One, "Conceptualizing Philanthropy in Faculty Work," serves as an introduction to the volume by establishing a working definition of philanthropy and detailing the historical significance of philanthropy within faculty work. In this section, Sulek's chapter recovers the original meaning of philanthropy by exploring Prometheus's philanthropic character and Plato's substantiation of the philanthropic Protagoras. Sulek engages in a comparative analysis to argue that the faculty role is philanthropic in nature, contributing to the volume by portraying the intersection of philanthropy and faculty work in a slightly different light from some other scholars who suggest that it is a separate category from teaching, research, and service.

Part Two, "Purposes and Motivation for Faculty Work," explores factors that lead faculty to be philanthropic while simultaneously confronted with making choices about time allocation of job requirements. In this section, Laird employs Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) 2011 data to investigate patterns of faculty gifting time, and finds that faculty of color, full-time faculty, education faculty, and biological science faculty gift more time than their counterparts. As Laird investigates faculty gifting time, it would be interesting to see if these patterns hold true with only graduate faculty, particularly important because many graduate students assume faculty appointments themselves. It would further be interesting to explore graduate students' exposure to philanthropy, and in turn whether their first-hand perception of philanthropy embedded in the faculty career could influence how they propel this movement forward as the future generation of faculty.

Moving forward, Part Three, "Philanthropy as an Aspect of Academic Professionalism," embeds the notion of philanthropy in academia, particularly with regards to varying expectations and purposes, in order to evaluate its fit in professorial careers. In this section, DeZolt looks at how faculty in for-profit institutions serve the public good. She finds that they bring their professional practice and philanthropic service to their teaching and research, and that they support social change-oriented research. In light of the current debate about the value of for-profit higher education, DeZolt finds that similar to traditional not-for-profit faculty, for-profit faculty deeply engage in the philanthropic nature of their work.

Part Four, "Faculty Leadership and Community Engagement," examines the relationship between engagement, leadership, and philanthropy in the trajectory of the future faculty career. For example, in Chapter Fifteen, Kezar and Gehrke explore faculty grassroots leadership as philanthropy by describing a form of philanthropic faculty leadership and providing strategies for campus leaders to foster such activism. This chapter adds that spearheading new projects and taking on leadership roles are possible forms of philanthropy that faculty may undertake.

Lastly, Part Five, "The Public Good and the Future of Academic Work," concludes the volume with a chapter by Rice, Saltmarsh, and Plater, who incorporate the contributions of the earlier chapters and address the foreseeable challenges for faculty in the coming years. Taken together, these five sections discuss the neglected philanthropic dimension of faculty work.

Shaker's volume brings attention to the under-studied philanthropy dimension of faculty careers from the perspectives of faculty members themselves. This contribution is uniquely important in that the scholars describe the infiltration of philanthropy in their own careers. As decisions about the future of American faculty—amid increasing demands for accountability, and compartmentalizing faculty work into three distinct categories of teaching, research, and service—faculty philanthropy in light of Payton's (1988) conceptualization is often forgotten. As faculty members are increasingly evaluated by research productivity and student course evaluation results, this volume reveals that there is more to the faculty career, including contributing to the public good, which ought to be recognized if philanthropy is to propel forward in future professorial careers. Austin illustrates this, as she recognizes that faculty members make choices about using their time and participating in activities that benefit other people and the broader society. In a time of great change, it is important that philanthropy carves out a niche in the professoriate in order for its presence to remain as an element of professorial work, and this volume does just that. The volume shows how philanthropy can take several forms—as either its own dimension of faculty work, or its incorporation into the traditional teaching, research, and service dimensions.

In addition to the many strengths of this volume, there are several noteworthy areas that could be further developed. In the volume, scholars discuss policy implications of the intersection between faculty and philanthropy. For example, Laird shares important policy questions about support of faculty giving at a time of growing global competitiveness, and Rhoades states that the current political American economy of higher education lacks incentives for faculty to voluntarily engage in philanthropy. While the scholars explain the very real policy implications of the intersection between faculty work and philanthropy, this conversation seems one-sided without acknowledging the voices of policy makers themselves. As Liang, Sandmann, and Jaeger discuss this hotly contested topic by stating "at this critical time of demands for accountability and relevancy from higher education, establishing an understanding of the philanthropic value and nature of faculty work can bring clarity and accuracy to discussions about the professoriate" (p. 231), it would be helpful to hear policy makers' opinions on this topic.

Furthermore, another aspect of this volume that deserves further consideration is the limited methodological approaches to investigating the issue at hand. Burlingame states that exploring faculty contributions to the public good through philanthropic aspects of their work is challenging because of the diverse ways in which they engage in philanthropy. For example, Turner explains that philanthropic contributions could be for the common good of academic institutions or for society at large, and Moody details that philanthropy could be in the form of helping, giving, serving, or advocating. In order to capture the diversity of philanthropic aspects in which faculty engage, several methods are employed, such as Moore and Blake's reflection on their experiences with philanthropy and multicultural faculty work, and Lynn's case study. However, with the exception of Laird's quantitative analysis of 2011 FSSE data, this volume lacks large-scale investigations on this topic. Although the reflections and commentaries are helpful in the context of the issue, this volume could be strengthened by the addition of methodologies that could give a broader perspective on this topic across the nation. As such, perhaps this volume could serve as the foundational basis for a broader study.

The current American higher education landscape encompasses increasing calls for accountability, assessment of student learning, and production of research. Economic implications guide the trajectory of the future of higher education as financial resources—access to higher education, size of endowment as a way to measure prestige (e.g., US News and World Reports), race to secure more grant money, and generation of revenue—seem to dictate the field. It is in this context in which *Faculty Work and the Public Good: Philanthropy, Engagement, and Academic Professionalism* enters the higher education conversation by explicating the presence of philanthropy in the contemporary faculty career, and warns of its potential disappearance if faculty and policy makers fail to recognize it as a distinguished part of this line of work. This volume does not fit organically within the contemporary higher education conversation, as focus on the public good is not at the forefront of discussion in the wake of an economic recession, yet Tierney and Perkins argue that academic work needs to change if it is to stay relevant in the evolving 21st century. While the spotlight is not on this conversation, Shaker and her contributing authors add something vitally important, yet fundamentally basic, to our conversation about present and future higher education—the innate nature of philanthropy in the faculty career. This volume encourages us to think beyond the economics of higher education, and to consider the philanthropic roots of the faculty career. Hopefully, this volume can start a new conversation for both policy makers and the public, demonstrating the importance of faculty work and the public good.

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