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Professional Service:

Improving the Prospects

Most universities in America include in their mission statements the functions of teaching, scholarly activity, and service. Taking my own university system as an example, its Board of Regents in 1989 stated the core mission of the University of Wisconsin Comprehensive Campuses to "meet the educational and personal needs of students through effective teaching," and to "expect scholarly activity, including research, scholarship, and creative endeavor that supports its programs," and "encourage faculty and staff participation in outreach activity." This tripartite mission for institutions of higher education is replicated in the definition of the role of the faculty. Personnel documents in these universities typically define the faculty role in terms of these same three categories: teaching, scholarly activity, and service.

Linking University Mission with Faculty Roles

In the case of teaching and scholarly activity, the links between the institutional mission and the faculty role are relatively clear. The university offers a curriculum that includes an array of programs that have been carefully defined and designed. The faculty are expected to teach the courses that constitute that curriculum, and they are evaluated on their success in doing so. Universities, with considerable variability, to be sure, maintain and extend human knowledge by requiring their faculties to meet certain expectations of engagement in scholarly work. Most require, for retention or promotion, that faculty document that they have made public contributions to the store of knowledge. Theoretical work is generally most highly valued, particularly when it is published, but here, too, there is wide variability among institutional expectations. This variability has become more formally acknowledged in recent years due to the influence of Ernest Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Across all this variabil-

ity in scholarly and creative endeavor, however, faculty work is clearly and directly related to institutional mission.

The link between institutional mission and faculty activity in the service role is much less clear. This is not for lack of definitions of professional service that make the connection explicit. Elman and Smock (1985), for example, define professional service as "work based on the faculty member's professional expertise that contributes to the mission of the institution." Despite the identification of these two key elements (expertise and mission) within the definition of professional service, many institutions enumerate in personnel guidelines a wide range of activities that do not meet this definition. For example, many universities treat contributions to any external organization or group as professional service without regard to the expertise of the faculty member who provides it. Most never make the connection to the mission clear. They permit the individual faculty member to identify external beneficiaries of their services (whoever and wherever they might be) without acknowledging to those faculty members that providing that service is endorsed by the university as mission-related. Rarely does a university identify its service beneficiaries and constituencies at an institutional level and link its commitments to that service to the criteria and standards of faculty evaluation in retention and promotion decisions. This is, in my view, the heart of the reason that service is a weak third category of evaluation for retention and promotion. If this is a matter of concern, and we are to address it, universities will need to build organizational links between their mission statements and faculty work in the area of professional service.

In terms of prestige, if not time and effort, professional service is typically the category of faculty evaluation that is least critical to retention and promotion. In faculty personnel documents it is relatively undeveloped in terms of expectations and standards of performance. Most universities have conventional expectations of what constitutes appropriate faculty work in the areas of teaching and scholarly activity. Experienced faculty are generally reliable raters of these activities in personnel reviews. The rating of service is more often ad hoc. As long as something is being done, and it appears to be useful, service is routinely recorded as having been accomplished. This valuing of sincere efforts (apart from considerations of expertise and mission) to contribute one's knowledge and skills to others beyond the walls of the university has the effect, in my opinion, of devaluing professional service. Service becomes "good works" rather than a contribution to the mission of the university. Along these lines, I have seen department chairs argue in personnel evaluations that any activity that promotes the reputation of the university is appropriate profes-

sional service.

I think it is generally acknowledged that faculty performance review criteria weigh professional service below research and teaching. What this means cannot always be stated precisely (unless collegial evaluation is grounded in a point system), but it generally has one of the following three effects:

First, some faculty ignore service—without apparent consequence. If an individual is an excellent teacher and scholar, the absence of service generally does not present an obstacle to that individual's retention or promotion.

Second, some faculty members do involve themselves in service, but they see it as a distraction or an additional burden to their "real" work. They usually understand what the university or their colleagues value (scholarship and teaching), and they, themselves, wish to labor in those fields. They may undertake enough external work, however, to have something in the evaluation file.

Third, there are other faculty who are committed to, and engaged in, professional service, but perceive that their efforts are not appreciated. These individuals are unable to demonstrate that their service contributions are as valuable as the teaching and scholarly contributions of others. Under these circumstances, they tend to regard their service as a personal, rather than an institutional, commitment.

The Recipient's Interest in Faculty Professional Service

Faculty perceptions of their professional service are likely to be reinforced by the service recipients. Where there is not a strong link between the institutional mission and faculty service activity, service recipients often see that service as a contribution from the individual. This is reinforced when the commitment to offer the service is given by the individual rather than the institution; when the service contribution ends when an individual leaves the university or develops different interests; or when a faculty member who is providing quality service is not retained or promoted for reasons residing in the other categories of evaluation.

Community recipients of service also, not surprisingly, tend to see service as "good citizenship" when the link to the university's mission is not apparent. Most businesses and agencies in a community have employees who contribute their time and energy to community activities and events. Some of these businesses even expect their employees to be involved and visible in some community activity or another—as good will ambassadors. They tend to see university professional service from this frame of reference and may question whether it should be part of a faculty member's job description. One CEO of a

national corporation expressed puzzlement that a university would define service as part of the faculty role. His perspective was that every employee in his company is expected to serve the community in one way or another as part of a personal commitment to the region. This view misses the key link between service and faculty expertise. More accurately, it would miss the linkage if universities actually made it. In some instances, of course, what we regard as university service is no more than good citizenship. When neither the link to the faculty member's expertise nor to the mission of the university is apparent in the work, one can hardly blame those who see no difference between the volunteerism of their own employees and the service of the faculty.

The lack of clarity about the difference between professional service and volunteerism creates additional complexities and tensions. As my Chancellor has noted, many in our community want the university to be a larger contributor of individual volunteerism. They would prefer to see the university faculty and staff in service clubs, community charitable campaigns, organized social service activities, youth athletics, and so on. Faculty and staff who are involved in these activities can, with some justice, marshal a case for their reward that is grounded in the value of that service to the community. Indeed, if the university adopted a "customer driven" definition of the faculty service role, it is likely that it would not distinguish, much less differentially value, service that is grounded in expertise and mission from volunteerism.

Community expectation and perception in this context creates uncertainty in the evaluation of faculty service activity. For example, most of us have seen activities put forward as contributions to professional service that do not meet the test of expertise and mission. If a philosopher plays viola in a community string quartet that is not related to a university program, one should not expect that activity to be regarded as a dimension of the faculty member's employment. Nor should one expect others, outside the university, to see it that way. However, if a musician from the university is playing in a community string quartet because the university has made a commitment to develop the arts in the region, she and her colleagues should expect that activity to be regarded as professional service. Similarly, programs with explicit public service dimensions such as education, nursing, political science, and others need to make their expectations of faculty contributions part of their mission if universities are to make progress in differentiating role-related activities. In short, unless the university makes its service mission clear to the community, those outside the university may not see the difference between these two cases. For that matter, the philosopher may not understand the distinction either. If the university regards this difference as important in the evaluation of faculty work and

in accomplishing the university's mission over time, it will need to address the education of the community as well as engage the faculty in its understanding of professional service. This has important implications for what it might take to bring the value of professional service to parity with teaching and scholarship.

The University's Interest in Faculty Professional Service

The university will not be able to harness the full power of its contributions to external constituents for its own development as long as it does not embrace professional service as an important part of the campus mission. In the current milieu, universities rarely require faculty to demonstrate that their service activities contribute to the furtherance of specific goals of the university. In the absence of university articulation of the activities that further its mission, individual faculty members are left to decide on their own how to make their knowledge available to those who might benefit from it. The institution has provided little direction to ensure that the collective activity of the faculty adds up to a contribution to its constituencies. This is not a particularly purposeful use of faculty time and effort. If the campus wishes to be more purposeful, it must articulate a set of priorities and then find a way to make encouragement and reward of service that furthers those priorities part of its organizational process.

This is, perhaps, a more directive notion of professional service than campuses have been willing to adopt. But the cost of not adopting it has, perhaps, been the undervaluing of the professional service that has been rendered.

One campus with which I am familiar published a brochure identifying a number of specific professional service activities that its faculty provided to regional constituencies. The development of this publication created a level of recognition and acknowledgment of these activities that had the effect of tying this service to the campus mission. Other campuses have achieved a comparable result by creating centers or institutes as service outreach arms. Service activities undertaken through these organizational structures become, therefore, mission-related. My university is developing a Partnership for Learning to collaborate with the public school districts in our region on professional development programs for teachers, new approaches to teacher education, and new approaches to student learning. Activities undertaken through the partnership will be, as a result of the formal collaboration, mission-related. These are only a few of the ways that a university can create explicit links between its mission and faculty professional service activities. Development of these

links may also, over time, raise the value of professional service (and possibly some academic professions) in the eyes of the university's community.

Evaluating the Quality of Professional Service

If professional service is to be elevated in status, recognized as important to the campus, and rewarded as a dimension of professional advancement, it is also important that the institution clarify the character and quality of the professional service it expects. This will involve both sharpening the domain of professional service and adopting rigorous standards of quality within that domain. Both efforts are required if professional service is to be truly valued as an activity by those who perform it as well as those who receive it.

To sharpen the domain, campuses will need to tie professional expertise both to the training and experience of the faculty member and to the purposes of the university. Work that calls upon a faculty member's education, training, and experience as an educator will count as professional experience; work that is grounded in avocation or personal interests will not. A colonial historian is not providing professional service when he sits on the board of a mental health clinic. A clinical psychologist might be, however. A faculty member in a regional university is probably not providing professional service to a small business in the Virgin Islands. Were she serving a small business in her region through a university-sponsored program, on the other hand, she probably would be.

Moreover, if professional service is to be valued by those who undertake it, it must have a character and quality that makes it as intellectually rigorous as the other areas of evaluated faculty activity—teaching and scholarly activity. Therefore, in addition to being grounded in faculty expertise, professional service should be expressed in activities that transfer knowledge, apply knowledge, use knowledge for public purposes, teach others to use knowledge, or guide effective learning in the public sphere. In addition, these activities should improve the effectiveness of the faculty member as a teacher or a scholar. Ideally, they should provide materials that can be used in instruction or opportunities for further research. These are, of course, benefits to the university, but they are also benefits to the individual. Indeed, they are the kind of benefits that break down the idea that professional service is an additional burden to an already too crowded set of obligations.

As Ernest Lynton has argued, in professional service, quality matters. Lynton has analyzed the processes required to engage in professional service and shown that they are comparable to the processes that constitute other scholarly

activity. This is important because it permits the evaluation of service along a dimension of quality in personnel reviews. Every contribution is not necessarily comparable to every other, and those who work hard to provide high quality service should have the expectation that quality will be rewarded. Service should not be equated to time served. If it were, we could not rely on it to make judgments about retention and promotion (Lynton, 1995).

If we are to change the way service is conducted and valued in the university, it will be important to identify service activities that will benefit the faculty who provide the service as well as the service recipients and the university. Unless there is long-term mutual benefit to engaging in service activities, faculty will only do as much or as little as is required for the basic obligation. To elevate the status of professional service, we must encourage the kind of activities that are worth doing. If service is regarded as an optional activity (one that plays no role in faculty professionalism), its sustainability will be dependent on individual altruism. It will last until the individual finds another project or a distraction. To become a robust component of academic professionalism, professional service must become an integral part of the faculty member's institutional life. I believe it is worth our effort to review how this might come to be.

Service Benefits: Recipients

One approach we can take here is to ask how each of the partners in a professional service transaction might benefit from the effort. For the service recipient, this might seem obvious, but it is worth some reflection. Knowledge or skill in a useable form is a valuable resource. When the transformation of knowledge into useful knowledge is not straightforward, it can also be a scarce resource. The more the professional service is grounded in the special expertise of the faculty member, the more valuable it can be to the recipient. If a faculty member provides a service that almost any educated person could provide, it is helpful but not special. If that service is tied to knowledge in one's area of expertise, it is, potentially, a rare commodity. For example, an economist specializing in regional development can provide local government a level of expertise it might not otherwise be able to afford. It is this connection that helps move professional service beyond volunteerism or contributions of time and effort based on avocation or personal interest. Many caring individuals can volunteer to help clean and beautify a homeless shelter, only a few can provide the research base to help the shelter design or evaluate its programs.

Service Benefits: Faculty

Faculty members benefit most from professional service when their service activities enrich their teaching or their research. When faculty develop service projects, they need to think about how those projects will help themselves as much as they think about how they will help others. Service can provide data for research projects, case study material for courses, contacts for future collaboration, guest lecturers for courses, internships for students, and so on. When a service project has these kinds of benefits, it begins to seem less like an "add on" to faculty work.

Service Benefits: The University

The benefit of professional service to the university is the third part of the equation that is often left out of discussions. The professional service of the faculty has the potential to support and further the mission of the university. To the extent that this is accomplished, those on campus who are in a position to recognize and reward service contributions will have a more compelling reason to do so. A university must be responsive to its constituents, and the activities it undertakes on their behalf generally need the involvement of faculty if they are to succeed. Our Partnership for Learning, for example, is born out of a need for continuing professional development by regional teachers. This kind of programming requires university faculty involvement in collaboration with teachers. It is incumbent on university administrators, therefore, to identify those activities and projects that the university regards as "mission promoting" activities.

Elevating the Status of Professional Service

Although it is likely that many of the obstacles to developing valued professional service within a university faculty are conceptual, clarifying what professional service can, and should, be is very much a preliminary to operational questions. Given the dominance of teaching and scholarly activity in most university faculty members' priority sets, how does an institution go about elevating the value and status of professional service? It seems to me that this must be done in a number of venues simultaneously.

...in the Faculty Recruitment Process

Administrators can promote some attention to the question of the kind of professional service that is most appropriate by dealing with it explicitly in

the hiring and orientation of new faculty. One purpose this serves is to address the conception of professional service with those who are least likely to have a well-formed idea of it, but who also have a powerful motivation to develop some activities of this kind. Young faculty are not generally taught as graduate students to think of their "knowledge transfer" roles. Many tend to see service as volunteerism or as a public relations arm of the university. They also know that their retention will depend upon their success in research and teaching. However, new faculty want to know very clearly what they will need to do to be retained and promoted. Thus, they are open to learning what will be expected of them in the area of professional service. By outlining professional service expectations in interviews and orientation sessions, university administrators can use new faculty as one line of communication back to department chairs. At our university, all new faculty receive a one-course load reduction to participate in a new faculty seminar. Veteran faculty and administrators meet with the group to discuss the university's mission and guiding philosophy of education, expectations for reappointment, the challenges of teaching, and other topics. I have made presentations to this group on our Provost's understanding of professional service.

New faculty will certainly carry these discussions back to their chairs as they seek guidance in planning their activities and commitments. In order to provide good advice to their new faculty, chairs will have to become informed about the kind of service that administrators are urging upon new faculty. The university may need to provide professional development opportunities to chairs on this topic. Since chairs can be presumed to want to help new faculty succeed, it is in their interest to understand how to be effective advisors. Their challenge will be to help new faculty find ways to integrate professional service into their other activities so it will not be regarded as an add-on.

Lest one jump to the conclusion that this approach is needlessly or perversely indirect, I hasten to add that deans will also need to work with chairs and departments to help them reconceptualize the importance of professional service. Faculty leaders (department chairs, personnel committee chairs, tenure committee chairs, and so on) potentially have the greatest impact on strengthening the effectiveness of professional service. They are the ones who evaluate their colleagues face to face on an annual basis and can engage them in an understanding of the benefits of these kinds of activity.

...*in Department Culture*

Unfortunately, the department is also the level of greatest resistance to change in the value of professional service. Department leaders know how the

department benefits from high quality teaching and research. But it is not typically apparent to them how they benefit from high quality professional service. This is, operationally, the work of the dean. If deans do not support departments in creating benefit for those who participate in mission-related professional service, the concept will never become operational. In practical terms, this means that deans must make appropriate professional service a dimension of reappointment, and they must enforce its consideration in salary reviews. If these things do not happen, the concept will have no operational conduit. Addressing the reward of appropriate professional service in personnel reviews is the key to organizational acceptance and elevation of its importance.

...*in Personnel Processes*

Because personnel evaluation is a distributed process on most campuses, making the concept of mission-related professional service operational requires that administrators work with all levels of retention and promotion review. For example, it is important that academic administrators work with campus personnel review committees to sharpen both the domain and quality criteria for appropriate professional service. Some campuses have developed personnel policy on the weighting and value of professional service in faculty personnel actions. Administrators need to review these policies to determine whether they reflect the faculty expertise and campus mission in their characterization of service activities. The appropriate campus academic administrator ought to meet with personnel review bodies to talk about what constitutes professional service. It is valuable to do this annually, prior to the cycle of review and recommendation.

...*through University Leadership*

University leadership is responsible for helping the university realize its mission. Academic administrators are, therefore, the ones who have primary responsibility for creating and maintaining the commitment to professional service on a campus. A faculty that is actively engaged in high quality, mission-related service is a powerful tool to help the university accomplish its goals. The key to this, of course, is that campus leaders themselves understand how professional service can help them meet these responsibilities. The work of higher education professional associations and organizations of higher education to promote this understanding of the possibilities inherent in professional service is especially useful. For example, the AAHE Roles and Rewards project has provided a national forum for discussion and clarification of these issues.

The lesson I draw from all this is that in order to build professional ser-

vice activity in the faculty and elevate its status and value, the campus will need to develop ways to incorporate recognition of professional service into its personnel structures.

...*through Personnel Documents*

It is traditionally up to campus academic leadership and faculty governance groups to express the campus mission in operational terms. This needs to be done formally, in written personnel documents. I have three kinds of documents in mind.

First, written personnel policies and other documents need to contain definitions of professional service that explicitly refer to faculty expertise and campus mission. Campus administrators ought to review their personnel documents to determine whether references to professional service are explicit enough to rule out acts of volunteerism and activities that do not promote the campus mission. They should also review documents to determine whether the criteria for professional service include expectations of quality.

Second, at the department level, the campus should also move toward creation of written faculty development plans that link individual activity to campus mission. Many universities are moving in this direction, and it should be especially beneficial in clarifying expectations for professional service. In recent years, the creation of faculty post-tenure review policies has been a source for the introduction of development plans. In these systems, senior faculty undergo periodic review on 4-6 year cycles. The reviews are often formative and built on a development plan that the faculty member created to initiate the review cycle. Another source of faculty development plans is the professional school accreditation process. The American Assembly of Colleges and Schools of Business (AACSB), for example, expects faculty members in accredited schools of business to have professional development plans. A plan will, of course, address all areas of faculty responsibility (teaching, scholarly activity, and service), but as we noted earlier, service is the area in which the connection between campus mission and individual effort is least conspicuous. Development plans should become the basis of annual performance review and should be incorporated in the personnel processes of retention, promotion, tenure, merit review, and post-tenure review (as appropriate).

Third, campus administrators, themselves, need to develop, in writing, a consistent approach to consideration of professional service in personnel actions. Administrators should develop and agree upon a set of questions to use in evaluating the professional service of faculty who are up for personnel re-

view. These will be most effective if they are incorporated in written memoranda and circulated widely throughout the university. I have found the following list to be a useful place to start:

- How close is the service to the core of the faculty member's intellectual interests, teaching areas or scholarly pursuits?
- Has the value of the service to the client been demonstrated and documented?
- Does the service contribute to an ongoing relationship between the recipient and the client?
- Has the faculty member made a case connecting the service activity with the campus mission?
- Does the service create research opportunities?
- Can the faculty member bring the service experience into the classroom?

This written list, or one like it, can be the basis of a discussion among administrators, between administrators and personnel committees, between administrators and departments, and so on. What is most important, of course, is the discussion, and the effort to reach a common set of expectations for faculty.

If these practices are built into personnel processes, the character, volume, and quality of professional service should more effectively contribute to the campus mission. This could have the effect of improving the stature of professional service in faculty eyes, and it could have the effect of improving the stature of the university with its constituents. If the potential outcome is attractive, one can be optimistic about the probability of change.

Suggested Readings

Boyer, Ernest. L. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professorate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. 1990.

Elman, Sandra E., and Sue Marx Smock. *Professional Service and Faculty Rewards: Toward an Integrated Structure*. Washington DC: NASULGC. 1985.

Lynton, Ernest A. *Making the Case for Professional Service*. Washington DC: AAHE. 1995.