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University Rewards for Faculty Community Service

by GERALD L. EUSTER & ROBERT W. WEINBACH

Survey data collected from deans and directors of graduate schools of social work indicate that community service is the least valued of faculty activities among faculty peers, deans, and university administrators. Publication and teaching are consistently the most valued and rewarded in tenure and promotion and other personnel decisions. Findings are discussed and recommendations made that might help to close the gap between the need for service activities and the existing faculty reward system.

In the past, public universities and land-grant universities in particular have firmly adhered to the basic concept of providing quality instruction, conducting research activities to benefit people of the states, and rendering services directly to the states' residents.¹ Declining enrollments and subsequent shifts in faculty responsibilities for teaching and other roles may significantly reduce the availability of faculty resources traditionally available for public service missions. In the years to come it is likely

that colleges and universities will find it necessary to examine and redefine their responsibilities for providing major contributions in community service to local, state, and national governments as well as to human service organizations.

At the present time, most public institutions of higher education still remain strongly committed to improving relations with the community through such means as delivery of clinical services, development of credit and noncredit lifelong learning opportunities, and extension to the public of various university-sponsored lectures, cultural events, and entertainment activities. Many faculty members energetically serve the public and private sectors in consulting roles, giving advice, educating public officials, answering questions, carrying out relevant studies, and generally making their expertise available in regard to technical matters or policy issues that arise. They are frequently called upon to provide testimony before legislative study committees or other public bodies.

Benezet and Magnusson contend that, despite higher education's high confidence rating among the public, educational leaders must continue to strive to make their institutions understood by the public.² Others believe that external relations are crucial to the institution's well-being and survival.³ A college or university is evaluated based on its contributions to the quality of life. Leslie observes, however, that there may be an actual decline in the public services offered by expert professors away from the central campus.⁴ He believes that many faculty members now dispense knowledge only through courses in the classroom and professional journals rather than through public outreach.

Schools of social work traditionally have served as a major community service arm for their respective universities. Many schools have benefited by enhancing their status and visibility in the community through concerted consultation with social agency boards, administrators, and professional and paraprofessional staff. Others have reached out to agencies through carefully designed in-service and staff development programs, often acquiring grants and grants for such activities.⁵ As a result of community-agency interactions, schools have been able to establish field learning practica for the benefit of both students and the community.⁶ Schools of social work clearly have contributed to the overall public service mission of higher education, often providing benefits from the initiative to those members who extend themselves to the community.

Despite the stated public service mission of colleges and universities, evidence indicates that public service efforts by faculty members are infrequently recognized and rewarded. Centra's survey of 200 heads indicated that only 20% considered public and community service a critical factor in evaluating faculty members, and one-third of the heads indicated it was not a factor at all.⁷ Public service is of minor importance in

evaluating faculty performance. Blackburn feels that faculty members themselves express uncertainty about the value of their service role.⁸ Although there is consensus that faculty members are expected to provide public service, they also recognize that service does not count much in their performance evaluations.

Despite a lack of recognition for public service in the university as a whole, one might suppose that expectations and rewards for service among social work educators would be somewhat greater. The purpose of the study reported in this article was to determine the perceptions of deans and directors of graduate schools of social work of the value and rewards assigned to community service and other faculty activities.

SURVEY METHODS

The three levels of faculty identified as having input into the reward system for community service (primarily through tenure and promotion actions) are faculty colleagues, deans or directors, and university administrators. The ideal measurement might have used representatives of all three groups as respondents. Problems related to sampling and anticipated response rates suggested a more practical alternative: a survey of deans and directors designed to collect their perceptions of the value of community service compared to other faculty activities. It was believed that their perceptions would have acceptable validity based on their experience as faculty members and participation in faculty tenure and promotion deliberations as well as their regular interaction with university administrators and faculty outside the department or college.

In July 1981, a cover letter and brief questionnaire were sent to all eighty-eight deans and directors of graduate social work programs currently accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.⁹ The initial request yielded fifty-nine completed or nearly completed responses. A follow-up request six weeks later resulted in twenty-

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two additional completed instruments, for a total of eighty-one out of eighty-eight potential respondents (92 percent). Two deans did not complete the instrument but replied to explain their lack of participation.

The survey instrument requested that respondents provide their perceptions of how much their university administrators tended to value and reward certain faculty activities, as reflected in rewards of tenure and promotion, merit raises, and status recognition. They were asked to rank order (with 1 representing most valued and 5 representing least valued) the activities of community service, obtaining grants and contracts, publication, research, and teaching. The rank ordering of the five activities was then performed again from the respondent's own perspective as dean or director. Finally, the respondents rank ordered the activities from the perspective of a faculty member's peers within the academic unit.

Community service was broadly defined as "service to local, state, and national governments; service to professional organizations; and/or service within the university." No distinction was made between paid or voluntary service, and no effort was made to provide a relative weighting of activities within the definition of service. The definition was written to exclude service activities not associated with a faculty member's knowledge and expertise as a social worker-educator—for example, church, recreation or other activities that might be considered part of anyone's role as a "good citizen."

To provide a general indication of the extent of faculty members' major contributions to community service, deans and directors were asked to indicate the approximate percentage of their faculty who provided such services. In estimating this percentage, the word "major" was included and emphasized so that individuals who offer only token involvement or "one-shot" services would not be counted as contributors.

Despite an exceptionally high response

rate, a sizeable number of respondents (twenty-nine) did not provide rank orderings as requested. They ranked more than one activity as "valued most" or "valued least." Analysis of these twenty-nine responses provided a less precise indicator of relative value placed on the activities than was obtained from the fifty-two responses for which rank ordering was completed as requested.

Data analysis consisted of collation and compilation of frequency distributions and central tendency data for all available responses. Separate analysis of correctly completed rank orderings was performed. Finally, correctly and incorrectly ranked responses were combined and examined in toto by categorizing individual valuations for each activity into one of three ratings (a ranking of 1 was categorized as high value or reward; rankings of 2, 3, or 4 were classified as middle value or reward; and rankings of 5 were rated as low value or reward). While this collapsing of categories resulted in some loss of precision for correctly ranked data, it enabled the authors to use the larger data set for drawing implications and conclusions.

FINDINGS

The responses of the seventy-nine respondents who replied to the item about percentage of faculty providing major community service ranged from 0 to 100 percent. Frequencies tended to cluster in the 50 to 60 percent area (mean = 57.6, median = 60), supporting the belief that community service may represent a significant expenditure of time and effort for a majority of graduate faculty members.

Responses of deans who performed a correct rank ordering of activities indicated that community service was the least valued and rewarded of activities among university administrators and among deans, and was somewhat more valued and rewarded than grantsmanship among faculty peers. (See Table 1.) Both publication and teaching were perceived as highly valued at all three levels. Deans were seen as valuing grants

TABLE 1
Deans' and Directors' Perceptions of
Valuation of Faculty Activities by University
Administrators, Deans, and Faculty Peers (N=52)

Activity	Level of Valuation ^a					
	University Administrators		Deans or Directors		Faculty Peers	
	Mean Rankings	Rank Order of Means	Mean Rankings	Rank Order of Means	Mean Rankings	Rank Order of Means
Community service	4.60	5	4.25	5	3.69	4
Grants/contracts	3.52	4	3.88	4	4.18	5
Publication	1.92	1	2.42	2	2.14	2
Research	2.49	2	2.88	3	3.31	3
Teaching	2.49	2	1.56	1	1.69	1

^aValuations were rank ordered, with 1 representing the most valued activity and 5 the least valued.

and contracts more than did faculty peers, while research was viewed as more highly valued by university administrators than among peers or deans. Overall, the variations in rankings were most pronounced at the administrative level—that is, the difference between community service rankings and those of other activities was greatest for this group.

Analysis of individual frequencies provides even less endorsement of the perceived value of community service in the reward system, especially at the university administrative level. Only one respondent viewed community service as most valued, as opposed to thirty-three who believed that university administrators valued it least. None of the deans or directors stated that they, as deans, valued community service most, but twenty-nine deans or directors valued it least. Only two

respondents perceived faculty peers as valuing service highest, while fourteen believed it to be least valued among this group.

When data were grouped to include responses from all eighty-one respondents similar patterns were evident. (See Table 2.) Deans' and directors' perceived university administrators' valuation and rewarding of community service as by far the lowest among faculty activities (59 percent perceived it as having a low value and 40 percent rated it in the middle range); only one dean rated public service as highly valued at the university administrative level. Second least valued activities were believed to be grants and contracts. Publication was seen as most valued by administrators among 53 percent of respondents; research and teaching fell mostly within the middle

TABLE 2
Deans' and Directors' Perceived Valuation
of Faculty Activities by University Administrators,
Deans, and Faculty Peers (N=81)

Activity	Perceived Valuation (percentage of responses)								
	University Administrators			Deans or Directors			Faculty Peers		
	High	Middle	Low	High	Middle	Low	High	Middle	Low
Community service	1	40	59	2	60	38	5	71	24
Grants/contracts	7	72	21	2	71	27	1	59	40
Publication	53	46	1	28	66	6	31	65	4
Research	28	67	5	15	79	6	9	78	13
Teaching	39	60	1	70	30	0	66	34	0

range of valuations, with only a very few respondents rating them in the low valuation category, but they were rated well above community service.

Deans and directors stated that they valued and rewarded community service more than did administrators but slightly less than faculty peers; however, the great majority (98 percent) still valued it in only the middle or low categories. The respective percentages in these two categories were almost exactly the reverse of those for university administrators—that is, 60 percent middle range and 38 percent low for deans versus 40 percent middle range and 59 percent low for administrators.

Of the three groups, faculty peers were seen as valuing and rewarding community service the most. The majority of ratings were in the middle range (71 percent); nearly a quarter of all respondents believed that departmental colleagues rated service as low. Teaching again emerged as the only activity consistently in the highest valuation category (66 percent). Grants and contracts were believed to be valued less by faculty peers than at other levels (rated low for peers by 40 percent of the respondents versus 21 percent for administrators and 27 percent for deans). Publication was thought to be valued by this group, but less so than by administrators.

Overall, in both analysis of ranked data from fifty-two respondents and of grouped data, teaching and publication were consistently viewed as highly valued and rewarded (ranking first or second) at all three levels. Research was believed to be valued more by university administrators than at the dean or faculty colleague levels. A similar but somewhat less distinct pattern existed for grants and contracts. The similarity may be explained in part by the difficulties inherent in separating the two activities, for example, in grant-funded research or contracts for evaluative research. Despite some unavoidable ambiguity in terminology, these activities were consistently rated below teaching and publication and, most important, well above commu-

nity service in the reward system as perceived by respondents.

There is some support for the belief that the teaching, scholarship, and service criteria described in the social work education literature are those applied to evaluate faculty.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the research findings suggest that, at least in social work education, they are not equally valued at the levels of evaluation that may affect career advancement. Community service is seen as considerably less important in decisions, about personnel action than are other factors. This is apparently true not only for those in other fields, but for social work education administrators and other social work educators and colleagues as well.

DISCUSSION

The data suggest that community service is less valued in the university reward system than are other faculty activities. It would be a gross oversimplification, however, to conclude that community service is not of value and should be diminished as a component of faculty and university activity. In terms of individual responsibility and institutional accountability, it is a necessary and desirable activity.

Faculty activities are not simply a zero-sum game where time spent enhancing one's skill and record in one activity necessarily detracts an equal amount from another. Indeed, as Bowen argues, "The functions of instruction, research, and public service in a college or university are jointly produced because they are all based on learning and because they are mutually supportive."¹¹ Community service very likely results in better classroom teaching; as educators come face to face with practitioners and learn from them, they include relevant and current material in classroom presentations. Materials developed for workshops and other service activities often lend themselves nicely to publication. Personal contacts are made for subsequent research, grant activity, and field placements. Service does not always preclude achievements in the other areas; it may

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actually support and enhance it. Research has even suggested that faculty members who are most active outside the university are often those most active and productive in teaching, research, and publication as well.¹²

What do the data suggest to the administrator and educator about community service? There is apparently a gap between what is good and needed and what is valued and rewarded on the individual level. A faculty member aware of this discrepancy cannot easily be encouraged to spend large amounts of time in service when rewards are more directly tied to publication and research. Based on the data, it is a disservice to a faculty member to suggest that public service is of equal importance for career advancement with other activities. Worse yet, it is misleading to suggest that service can substitute for a thin record of productive scholarship and quality teaching. Service should be viewed more realistically as a bonus to an already strong record of teaching and scholarship—an indication of professional involvement or evidence of a desirable career balance. While service may lead to or support productivity in other areas, clear demonstration of achievement in scholarship and teaching must be present.

Unless conditions change, an administrator may be placed in an untenable position. He or she may need to advocate community service for the good of the school and the profession (and, of course, for the clients of the profession). Yet the administrator must admit in all honesty that the individual faculty members who seek security and advancement in higher education might better spend their time writing for publication or in direct class preparation.

Can the gap between the desirable situation and the actual reward system be narrowed? One simple but unacceptable solution would be to sacrifice the long-term goals of service and structure activities to the reward systems as they exist. Individual faculty members have undoubtedly played the same and will continue to do so. But

eventually the image of the school (which inevitably reflects on the individual) would be negatively affected. Most important, the service needs and obligations of the university as a part of the community would go unmet. Universities and their schools of social work, as closed systems, would cease to thrive.

A far more desirable though more difficult approach to solving the problem involves education of faculty and administrators at all levels to the value and place of community service within higher education. Criteria for promotion and tenure and merit salary increases must be written to include and to define substantive service within a given field. When community service has been a criterion for advancement in the past, it has often been so loosely defined or described in the jargon of the field that persons on university promotion and tenure committees tend to discount it as just so much "padding" of the curriculum vitae. While misrepresentation of achievement sometimes can occur in regard to research or publication, it is more easily achieved in the service area because of a lack of clear definitions of what actually constitutes community service.

Distinctions must be made by social work educators as to what is truly substantive service and what is not. Criteria must be rigidly applied in unit evaluations. Issues such as the place of "unpaid" and "paid" consultation, "moonlighting," nominal membership in organizations as opposed to active leadership, and service in professional capacity as distinguished from acts of "good citizenship" must be resolved and spelled out and these decisions adhered to when recommendations are made by colleagues and deans.

Over time, credibility for service as a valuable and significant manifestation of faculty achievement and competence will evolve. However, until such time as service definitions are written to include only activities that call on faculty members' professional expertise, credibility for service will not exist. A faculty member may emerge

from unit deliberations with a reasonably strong recommendation and become bitter and disappointed when university committees find him or her lacking in achievements befitting an academician.

This survey of deans and directors does not discredit community service; it suggests that it is not as valued in universities as it should be or as we might believe it to be. The data call for change and a more deliberate effort to move service to a deserved position of respectability within the reward system of higher education.

NOTES

1. G. Lester Anderson, "Introduction," in Anderson, ed., *Land-Grant Universities and their Continuing Challenge* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1976), p. 1.
2. Louis T. Benezet and Frances W. Magnusson, "Preface," in Benezet and Magnusson, eds., *Building Bridges to the Public* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979), p. vii.
3. See, for example, Richard I. Miller, *The Assessment of College Performance* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979), p. 236; John A. Lucas, "Identifying Regional and Community Markets," in Paul Jedamus and Marvin W. Peterson, eds., *Improving Academic Management* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980), p. 245; and David C. Nichols, "Land-Grant Universities and Urban Policy," in Anderson, ed., op. cit., p. 233.
4. Larry L. Leslie, "Updating Education for the Professions: The New Mission," in Anderson, ed., op. cit., p. 254.
5. See, for example, Michael J. Kelly and Joanne Mascaro, "Liaisons: Linking University and State Human Service Agencies," paper presented at the Fourth Annual Conference of Training in the Human Services, Williamsburg, Virginia, October 1980.
6. See, for example, John McNeil and John J. Litrio, "Community Service Clinic: A Fieldwork Model at the University of Texas at Arlington," *Journal of Education for Social Work*, 17 (Winter 1981), pp. 111-118.
7. John A. Centra, *Determining Faculty Effectiveness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980), p. 133.
8. Robert F. Blackburn, "Evaluating Faculty Performance," in Jedamus and Peterson, eds., op. cit., pp. 463-464.
9. A copy of the instrument is available from the authors on request.
10. Richard M. Grinnell and Nancy S. Kyte, "Measuring Faculty Competence: A Model," *Journal of Education for Social Work*, 12 (Fall 1976), p. 46.
11. Howard R. Bowen, "The Products of Higher Education," *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 1 (Spring 1974), p. 10.
12. Carl V. Patton and James D. Marver, "Paid Consulting by American Academics," *Educational Review*, 60 (Spring 1979), p. 175.