

# SERVICE: THE THIRD RESPONSIBILITY OF PROFESSORS

By Dr. Martha C. Merrill Vice President for Academic Affairs,  
American University in Kyrgyzstan

## *Introduction*

Many university professors in the United States spend fewer hours per week in the classroom than do professors in Kyrgyzstan, but that doesn't mean that those professors work fewer hours. Because students in the US are expected to do a considerable amount of independent work, professors in the US spend lots of time planning assignments to generate that independent work and offering feedback to the students on their work. Also, professors at many kinds of institutions in the US are expected to do research – not simply to teach existing knowledge, but to create new knowledge. This expectation was discussed in an article in the previous issue of the Business Bulletin. In addition to teaching and research, however, professors at colleges and universities in the US usually have a third responsibility, *service*, which generally falls into three different categories: service to the institution, service to the discipline, and service to the community.

## *Service to the institution*

Service to one's institution can take a variety of forms. Five of the most common forms are mentioned below.

First, since most US colleges and universities have a tradition of faculty governance, they also have a tradition of faculty involvement in the committees that govern the university. Most universities will have a Curriculum Committee, some kind of a committee that deals with student infractions to the university's discipline code, one that advises the library on acquisitions, another that evaluates faculty applications for promotion and tenure, and one more that deals with long-range planning. Most universities also have some kind of a Faculty Senate, which goes by various

names, and which is involved in the overall governance of the university. Service on any of these committees or on the Senate is considered service to one's institution; the university can not run without these donations of time, intellect, and energy from its professors.

Second, sometimes some professors are involved in admissions campaigns.

Admissions campaigns should be distinguished from admissions *decisions*, which generally at the undergraduate level are made by admissions office staff (since students in the US generally don't declare a major, or specialty, until the end of their second year of study) and generally at the graduate level are made by individual departments. What's under discussion here is admissions *campaigns* — when the admissions staff of the university visits particular secondary schools or «college fairs» where a number of colleges and universities are represented, often some professors will go along, to speak with prospective students and their parents about the academic programs of the university. Students in the US tend to apply to half a dozen different universities, and often are accepted to several of them. Then it's up to them to decide which one they would like to attend, and the quality of professors in their chosen academic field often is the most important factor. Thus, the introductions to professors at college fairs and other events can be an important form of service.

Third, in some universities, providing academic advisement to students is considered service. Other universities pay faculty to do this. Since students in the US have elective courses, and often take a minor as well as a major (a specialisation as well as a specialness), they have many choices to make, and they often need the assistance of a professional in the field to decide which

math course to take, or whether to minor in, for example, a specific language or in a broader field like international affairs. Some universities consider this to be part of a faculty member's service; at Philadelphia University, for example, such advising is specifically mentioned as one of the items that a professor applying for promotion or tenure can "count" in his or her application (Philadelphia University *Faculty Manual*, 1999). At Richland College in Texas, on the other hand, faculty members are hired as advisers, paid extra, and work in a special advising center (Lord, 2000). Once again we see the truism that almost no policy or procedure is applied at every college and university in the US; there is enormous diversity, and a foreign observer should never assume that what he or she has experienced at one US university is typical of them all.

Fourth, developing a new program or evaluating an existing program may be considered service. For example, at the County College of Morris in New Jersey, each academic program undergoes a review every five years. Although an outside consultant also is called in, faculty within the university also serve on the review panel and they develop the criteria for the internal review.

Fifth, working on the institutional self-study for regional or specialized accreditation is considered as service to the institution. Accreditation of an institution, in the US, is performed by a non-governmental, regional association. The university prepares an institutional self-study in advance of the visit by the accreditation team, who are colleagues from universities in the region of a similar type. This institutional study, which usually is well more than a hundred pages in length, even for a small college, contains a myriad of data about the college or university as well as its self-assessment of how well it is achieving its self-defined mission. At a university the size of the American University in Kyrgyzstan, perhaps sixty or more faculty and staff would work on the institutional self-study for a year or so before the site visit would take place. This too would be considered service to one's university.

Specialized accreditation is the accreditation of a specific department or program within the university. This usually is done only in professional fields, such as business and education. Here, too,

the accreditation is done by a private, non-governmental body, and the program prepares a self-study in advance of the site visit. This, too, is considered service to the university.

#### *Service to the discipline*

Most professors in the US, as with most professors in Kyrgyzstan, teach in a specific discipline – sociology or math or French or whatever. Most disciplines in the US have professional associations, to provide a mechanism for scholarly exchange and for advancing the interests of the field. A professor also can provide service to his or her discipline in one of several ways.

One option is being an officer in a professional organization. Depending upon the size and scope of the organization, this can be a small job, or an enormous one. A second option is serving as one of the editors of a professional journal – the editor-in-chief, the book review editor, or some other function. A third alternative – perhaps the most thankless of the three – is to be involved in organizing a discipline's conference. Such conferences usually are held annually. Some, particularly smaller regional conferences, are staffed completely with volunteers; others have paid staff but rely on an enormous number of volunteers to make the conference work. The Modern Language Association and NAFSA: Association of International Educators, for example, both attract several thousand participants to their annual conferences; both organizations have paid staff who direct the conference planning. However, hundreds of volunteers also participate in organizing each conference.

#### *Service to the community*

Service by professors to the local community is often, but not exclusively, a characteristic of state-supported universities, where there is a sense that if community tax dollars support the university, then the community should receive something in exchange. This is particularly the case with a group of universities called *land grant universities*, which were created in the 1860's with grants of land from individual states to develop universities that would focus on practical skills, particularly the development of agricultural education. Each land grant university set up a co-

operative extension service, which would advise farmers and rural families in the area regarding the best ways to grow certain kinds of crops, to combat diseases in farm animals, and to deal with other problems of rural life where evolving science has practical applications. However, the idea of service to one's community now exists in most public and a number of private universities.

Professors with particular kinds of expertise may also advise local groups on a more individual basis, rather than through an organized system such as cooperative extension services. For example, the Chair of the Environmental Sciences Division at the School of Public Health at Columbia University, an "Ivy League" private university, regularly advised various groups regarding water quality issues, and the Dean of its School of Nursing worked with community task forces on AIDS prevention. Such service not only provides the community with professional expertise; it also provides the professor with practical experience with current problems in the field, and he or she thus can give the students a more up-to-date analysis of contemporary problems and issues in the discipline.

Such voluntary service should be distinguished from consulting, which a professor does for pay. Consulting work would not be considered service, since it enriches the professor. Service work

includes only that work which is done as a volunteer.

In this age of Internet communications and global travel, the idea of where the community is in which one does one's service has become broader. More and more professionals are doing service in countries other than their own. For example, four professors from various universities in the US have been actively involved in setting up programs throughout the CIS that improve professors' abilities to give assignments which develop students' critical thinking skills. Another professor, from AUK's partner consortium of universities in Indiana, was granted tenure at her university based primarily on her service work with journalists in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

#### *Conclusion*

The late president of the United States, John F. Kennedy, once said, "To those to whom much has been given, much is expected." University professors fall into the group of those to whom much has been given, in terms of intelligence, the resources used to educate them, and the opportunity to have intellectually and personally satisfying work. Therefore, much is expected from them as well: not only teaching and research, but also service to their institutions, to their disciplines, and to their broader community.

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#### **WORKS CITED**

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