Reconceptualizing the Academic Community for More Inclusive Knowledge Advancement: Breaking the Divide Between Academic and Non-Academic Staff

Alicja Rybkowska and Ana Godonoga
WU Vienna University of Economics and Business

Abstract
This article takes the collective character of knowledge advancement in institutions of higher education as a starting point to critically examine the predominant understanding of the academic community. The authors make a case for a reconceptualization of the academic community as a community of experts devoted to the advancement of knowledge, regardless of whether they conduct academic research or not. Such reconceptualization will lead to higher work efficiency and satisfaction among all staff and positively contribute to their well-being. This reconceptualization identifies a number of factors that currently undermine the communal and collective aspects of knowledge advancement, such as the diffusion of New Public Management practices, entanglement in professional hierarchies, competition for scarce financial resources, and lack of career incentives for cross-unit collaboration. An overview of existing responses to these challenges shows that they are insufficient for creating a sustainable and relatable sense of community among employees of higher education institutions. In response, the authors suggest interventions on an individual, institutional and policy level, including unionizing and reframing the work of academic and non-academic staff as centered on shared goals and values, which provides opportunities for exchange.

Alicja Rybkowska holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy. While her initial research focus was modern art and the interdependence of art and philosophy as well as the social and cultural consequences of this relation, in recent years she has moved to more socially oriented work. In 2020-2021 she worked as a rationality trainer and

collective intelligence facilitator for an NGO active in the field of deliberative democracy, community, capacity-, and consensus-building. Currently, she is involved in the European Universities Initiative at WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, where she develops strategic projects in teaching.

Ana Godonoga is a Research and Teaching Associate and Ph.D. candidate at the Institute for Higher Education Management, WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria. Her Ph.D. focuses on the social impact of higher education institutions. Previously, she worked on higher education performance, quality management and learning pathways in higher education at the OECD and UNESCO. Ana holds a joint MA in Research and Innovation in Higher Education from Danube University Krems, Austria and Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, Germany. Her research interests are at the intersection of university social responsibility, institutional theory and performance management of higher education.

It is undisputed that advancing knowledge is a collective effort. It is also uncontroversial to claim that this effort typically—though not exclusively—takes place within institutions of higher education and that knowledge advancement is one of their most important goals.[1] However, the attempts to specify how to pursue this goal, for what reasons precisely, and how this pursuit is influenced by its collective nature are less uncontroversial and become increasingly subject to critical discussion. Our paper contributes to such critical discussion by (1) showing how the collective aspect of knowledge advancement within higher education institutions is often either altogether neglected or unnecessarily constricted in literature on higher education, (2) explaining why this is detrimental to the academic community, and (3) suggesting some practical solutions to this problem.

The concept of academic community is central for this piece of writing. The main contribution of our paper lies in the reconceptualization of the academic community so that it includes more actors than only scholars. We understand the academic community as a community of experts devoted to the advancement of knowledge, with equally relevant roles and responsibilities. In the text, we will discuss this community as comprised of both academic staff (i.e. those engaged primarily with teaching and/or research duties, including graduate student workers) and non-academic staff (i.e. administrators, technicians, support and professional service staff) affiliated to higher education institutions (OECD, *Benchmarking Higher Education System Performance*). However, we distance ourselves from the professional hierarchies that this distinction between academic and non-academic work implies. We are convinced that mutuality, collegiality and solidarity are crucial for the whole community to thrive. We are critical of the dominant discourse on higher education institutions, which presents them primarily as engines of economic growth and concentrates mainly on the institutional,

depersonalized interconnections between various market players. In that discourse, knowledge is no longer pursued but produced; the commodity replaces the community. Barnett points to the poverty of the language used in public debate about the roles and future of higher education institutions: they need to be "entrepreneurial" organizations functioning in the "globalized world," ensuring "knowledge transfer" and "innovation" to its benefit (Gibbs and Barnett 10). However, the debate on their political and economic roles obscures the ethical and societal dimensions of their existence. Barnett suggests constructing a "counter-vocabulary that includes terms such as social engagement, public benefits, public goods, gender, rights and citizenship" (Gibbs and Barnett 10). A redefined concept of academic community seems to be an indispensable, if currently underestimated, part of such a vocabulary.

We believe such a perspective is necessary if institutions of higher education wish to further realize their "third mission," especially in its social and cultural aspect, which has been overshadowed by an economic agenda (Chatterton). In addition to knowledge and technology transfer—i.e. activities through which higher education institutions generate economic impact—they can provide broader societal and cultural impacts through continuing education, sharing resources and facilities with the community, outreach, and volunteering (Godonoga and Sarrico). Clark quotes Hesburgh on the paradoxical status of higher education institutions: they are conservative and saturated in tradition but at the same time they have a unique power to initiate social changes (Clark, *The Higher Education System* 182). The outlook for change is also inscribed in the set of terms typically used when discussing the role of higher education. Especially today, scholars are expected to face "grand" pressing challenges, experience "major breakthroughs," and make "ground-breaking" discoveries. Nonetheless, if they are to pursue "frontier" research, they need to be backed by the community. It is impossible to be drivers of social change when there is little or no support from colleagues, both individual and organized in the form of work unions. We argue that this support needs to transcend traditional divisions between academic and non-academic staff and we show how it can be guided by the ideal of mutual learning.

As an author duo, we represent exactly the sort of collaboration with colleagues from the extended academic community that we are arguing for: we are both at the beginning of our careers at a public Austrian university, having recently completed a PhD (Alicja) or planning to do so soon (Ana). However, while Ana represents the *wissenschaftliches Personal* (or scientific staff), Alicja belongs to the *allgemeines Personal* (general staff; each has its own workers' council and its own collective bargaining agreement). For that reason, us ever collaborating on an academic paper was quite unlikely. In the paper, we name multiple arguments why this division is disadvantageous for both groups and detrimental to the mission of academic institutions. We also discuss

solutions that would help make such collaboration an established practice rather than an opportune coincidence.

Both the arguments and solutions that we present are influenced by our positionality and reflect our own experiences of being a member of the academic community within the European Higher Education Area. We often find ourselves intertwined in the conformation of professional hierarchies, academic disciplines, service units and career development strategies. Alicja has received her doctoral training in Central Europe, where being a doctoral candidate means both prestige and precarity and involves such dubious practices as unpaid teaching assignments. She had the opportunity to start working on her dissertation while still in her master studies thanks to a special ministerial grant. Having started her own research projects very early, she also got disappointed with the reality of scholarly work early on and decided not to pursue further a research career after receiving her PhD. Ana is currently pursuing her PhD and has both research and teaching duties. Belonging to the lowest category of academic staff (i.e. a pre-doc position), she has observed the hierarchical nature of the academic environment and the uncertain job prospects experienced by peers at her level and in post-doc positions. Opportunities to advance in an academic role have become more competitive over time, and largely depend on one's research track record in top journals. Excellent teaching and engagement with society are secondary.

Moreover, results from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills show that higher education provides less stable job opportunities to young doctorate holders, compared to other employment sectors (OECD, *Benchmarking Higher Education System Performance*). This makes the academic career less attractive for PhD holders, who either switch to a non-academic position or leave universities altogether.

Identifying the problem

As indicated in the introduction, the dominant discourse on higher education tends to focus on the role that knowledge advancement plays for national economies and policy-making. Interpersonal relations within higher education institutions are rarely discussed outside the managerial context that focuses on the relations between academic and non-academic staff.[2] Any arising conflicts or personal struggles are seen as threats to the overall performance of the institution and not as a threat to the cohesion of the academic community. In a passage characteristic for such an approach, Clark writes:

> For a university to be entrepreneurial, it needs to acquire the right kind of organization, one that allows the institution to go on changing itself and adapting effectively to a changing society, one that allows its groups and individuals to become more effective than previously. (…) Structures are inescapable, but they can be made into ones that liberate [sic!], that tutor groups and

> individuals in how to be smart [sic!] about change. (*Sustaining Change in Universities* 174)

From such a perspective, the discontents of academic work are concerning only insofar as they affect the performance of academic staff and their readiness to participate in administrative and organizational tasks. Bess and Dee thus formulate it: "when workers are constrained (or feel they are constrained [sic!]) by tight deadlines and work schedules, there is little opportunity or incentive to explore potential improvements in strategy, structure, and operation in the organization" (120).

The academic-administrative divide has been a persistent challenge in contemporary higher education institutions (Szekeres). The diffusion of New Public Management practices in public sector organizations (Ferlie et al.) transformed tertiary schools into organizational actors (Koryakina et al.; Krücken and Meier) and gave rise to academic and knowledge capitalism (Slaughter and Rhoades; Olssen and Peters) and managerialism (McCarthy and Dragouni) in higher education institutions. The emphasis shifted to accountability to the public purse and efficiency and effectiveness of operations (Pollitt and Bouckaert), while the increasing casualization of work is explained by state budget cuts. Ever since, institutions of higher education have been adopting corporate practices, such as mission statements, organizational strategies, and performance management tools (Guenther and Schmidt) to monitor the quality of research and teaching.

Quality monitoring has gone from a model of collegial peer review to a managerial approach that involves performance targets and staff appraisal exercises. Meanwhile, the labor (i.e., faculty) and management (i.e., administration) perspectives on quality in higher education are increasingly divergent and carry different values (Worthen and Berry). In this transition, research excellence and scientific impact have become the currency to succeed and progress in an academic role (Bowl and Hughes). This "publish or perish" culture creates disincentives for collaboration and leaves little room for more multidisciplinary, inclusive, and participatory knowledge advancement models (Nowotny et al.).

Recurring testimonies of discrimination, disrespect, and distrust in higher education testify to the tensions and frustrations stemming from such managerial approaches (Keashly and Neuman; Lester et al.; Pyke). For example, evidence from the Changing Academic Profession international survey points to a deterioration of working conditions for academic staff (OECD, *Benchmarking Higher Education System Performance*). Examinations of scholarly life reveal that high demands of research and didactics are not paired with sufficient guidance and community support (Kinman; Berg et al.; McKenzie).

Efforts to improve working conditions in higher education often lack coordination, even though unionizing in this sector, as in any other,

could arguably empower their employees and increase standards of fairness and transparency (Rhoades, "Faculty unions, business models, and the academy's future.") These are especially relevant as growing dependence on external sources of financing continues to contribute to the precarious situation of both academic and non-academic workers. The casualization of academic labor demands a timely and uninterrupted transition from one project to another. This push for the continual output of intellectual labor has become a crucial expectation placed on those who work on temporary contracts or experience pay cuts. According to a 2016 report, contingent faculty (understood as both part- and full- time faculty who are appointed off the tenure track, AAUP) have substituted for tenure or tenure-track faculty in most types of American institutions (Hurlburt and McGarrath). Only a privileged core of employees do not need to worry about the consistency of their employment and compensation. For the precarious peripheries, the temporality of employment becomes a permanent state (Newfield; Shulman). However, with growing shares of non-standard employment (OECD, *Resourcing Higher Education: Challenges, Choices and Consequences*), such as subcontracted or outsourced work, even this contingent situation might appear like a privilege. As an effect, professional hierarchies become intertwined with hierarchies of usefulness, applicability, and monetization (Han). This results in a highly stressful, competitive, and exclusive work environment that by no means fosters a sense of solidarity and mutual trust, which are essential for building sustainable communities. Such work conditions can seriously distort collaboration, which is necessary in virtually all aspects of knowledge advancement, and poses serious perils to the quality of the higher education provision (OECD, *Resourcing Higher Education: Challenges, Choices and Consequences*). They furthermore result in higher employee turnover rates and, consequently, inhibit the creation of lasting relationships between potential colleagues and between students and teachers.

These problems are by now so deeply inscribed in the academic work that they became the sole focus of the annual International Conference on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Postgraduate Researchers, organized for the first time in May 2019 in Brighton. Although it is an overall praiseworthy effort to address the burning issue of the emotional challenges that researchers face in their work, the psychological, practice-oriented approach of the congress largely ignored the parallel need to create a meaningful and compelling narrative that could help to restore the sense of community among academic and non-academic staff and to counteract the negative effects of continuous competition and uncertainty.

Alongside counseling and coaching being made available to academic staff to increase their resilience and tolerance to failure, recognizing the detrimental effects of insufficient community support may

be pivotal in reconceptualizing, if not practically changing, contemporary higher education.

Narrow understanding of knowledge advancement restricts it to research (knowledge expansion) and—less frequently—teaching (knowledge transmission). However, both teaching and research rely on support from experts who are not directly involved in these activities but nevertheless have expertise in such relevant fields as curriculum design, educational technology, quality assurance, education policy, technology transfer, or research management. During the past few decades, the proportion of these experts increased in several countries, including Norway (Gornitzka and Larsen) and Denmark (Stage and Aagaard). In some systems, such as Australia (Croucher and Woelert), the US (Rhoades, "Envisioning invisible workforces: enhancing intellectual capital") and the UK (Gibbs and Kharouf; OECD, *Benchmarking Higher Education System Performance*), more than half of staff employed in institutions of higher education are support and professional service staff (i.e. non-academic). Their work as "blended professionals" (Whitchurch), which often spans both the academic and policy domains, adds value to the core functions of tertiary schools. For example, evidence points to a positive relationship between the size of the administrative body and research performance (Andrews et al.). A similar positive relationship was found with respect to educational performance (Baltaru; Rutherford). Professional service staff were likewise found to have a positive influence on the development of academic networks (Qu) and the acquisition of research funds (Ito and Watanabe).

Despite the value that these experts bring to higher education institutions, they often express feeling invisible (Akerman) and facing limited opportunities for career development and progression when compared to their academic counterparts. Moreover, professional service staff remain an insufficiently-researched category of employees in higher education, with data collection being largely focused on academic staff and institutional leadership (Bossu et al.). The studies that have been conducted point to issues related to job satisfaction (Bauer), career development (Gander), and relationships with academics (Szekeres). Their role in knowledge advancement, however, has not been sufficiently addressed in the literature.

Even though many of them have obtained a master's or even a doctoral degree (Ryttberg and Geschwind) and often have a deep understanding of academic culture, they are generally confined to their status as "non-academic" staff and often perceived as foreign to the mission of higher education institutions. Rogers and Schofield stress that "it is rare to find examples outside of higher education of organizations which categorize a substantial part of their workforce by reference to what they are not" and they demonstrate how this focus on structures and hierarchies, rather than objectives and outcomes, impairs the advancement of knowledge. Furthermore, these hierarchies are also a form of

discriminatory abuse leading to the marginalization and depreciation of professional service staff (Rogers and Schofield). These staffers are often excluded from bargaining unions that tend to reinforce the divide between academic and other professional staff. While unionization rates among academic staff are growing (see for instance the Higher Ed Labor United initiative in the US), as is the scholarship on this subject (see for instance Cain), there are little efforts both on the practical and theoretical level to highlight that at least some of the interests of academic and non-academic staff are shared and therefore could be better protected in a coordinated effort. The sense of community that we are arguing for is also incomplete when collective action is missing.

There is too little recognition in higher education institutions that learning opportunities are multifaceted and often unexpected, and may well go beyond encounters with academic colleagues. Pasque notes upon a critical analysis of the organizational discourses in American universities and colleges that

> …we reject any forms of resistance to our ideas as though alternative perspectives force us to choose. The complexities of the issues and shades of gray are absent. We end up demonizing the person who attempts to resist our ideas, or the original idea itself, rather than perceiving it as an opportunity to consider multiple perspectives. We often hold tight to our worldviews rather than considering a reshaping of the original form. (164–165)

Reflecting on these hierarchies of power, Cohn discusses how collaboration between academic and non-academic employees is often systematically discouraged: joint projects are not considered in employee evaluations and do not count as academic achievement; the two groups are spatially divided, occupying separate rooms, if not buildings; and the notion persists that while researchers could do their work without expert support, the experts working at higher education institutions depend on the existence of researchers to be able to perform their tasks. However, the expertise of non-academic employees is more broadly applicable than just within the higher education context and they could also find occupations elsewhere. Their work is complementary, not ancillary, to the scholarly work of academics. Appreciation of this fact is crucial if we really want to prioritize knowledge advancement as the main goal of tertiary schools. Focusing on the shared mission rather than on diverse ways to get there helps to create a sustainable, resilient community, and such a community might be a form of resistance against neoliberal trends discussed above.

Existing responses to the problem

Historically, universities were established as communities of teachers and students, and their protective function was as important as their

educational role. Similar to guilds of other professions, *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* helped teachers and students collectively defend their interests before local municipal or ecclesiastical officials and to secure certain privileges (Ridder- Symoens 20). Early universities also attracted a number of people who were not directly involved in studying but were under universities' authority and could benefit from their protection (39): beadles, messengers, scribes, and booksellers (126–129). Some of them were required to demonstrate a certain level of academic qualification in order to be allowed to perform their tasks. Thus, universities were from the very beginning networks of people whose level of involvement in the advancement of knowledge varied, but who were nevertheless united around that shared goal. They were also free to join the community (provided that they were granted admission) in order to do so in a protected environment.

Contemporary networks and associations offering support to institutions interested in community engagement differ in scale (from local, such as the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement in the UK, to global, such as the Talloires Network of Engaged Universities or the Principles for Responsible Management Education network) and aims, but they do recognize the special role of higher education institutions in society and the personal commitment it takes to play this role effectively. Apart from established organizations, there are also numerous informal actions and movements that unite scholars, non-scholar experts, and students worldwide. Higher education labor is increasingly organizing: the last few years brought about mass protests against marketization of higher education in Austria (Uni Brennt, 2009) and in Great Britain (Demolition, 2010; another series of strikes against privatization of universities in 2018). In 2018, the new act on higher education in Poland sparkled a series of occupational strikes and demonstrations. In a spontaneous reaction to the reform, Akademicki Komitet Protestacyjny (Academic Protesting Committee) was formed by academics and students from several institutions. Their biggest concern was the introduction of governing boards that would consist of people not affiliated with the university, which they saw as a threat to the autonomy of universities. In 2019, institutions worldwide joined the Elsevier boycott, criticizing the provider for undermining the communal aspect of science and denying access to knowledge to less-wealthy institutions. In the same year, over 100,000 people (mostly students and educators) joined protests in Brazil triggered by cuts in education spending and postgraduate scholarships. In 2020 in Hungary, the privatization of the University of Theater and Film Arts and the reorganization of its board under a close associate of Viktor Orbán led to protests against the increasing government control over higher education, and students occupied the premises of the university from August until September, when distance learning was introduced as a COVID-19 containment measure. In January 2021, the appointment of the new rector of Boğaziçi University raised

concerns about Erdoğan's government interfering with academic freedom and was followed by several protests; as a result, the incumbent rector had to resign and was followed by another controversial figure with close links to the government. At the end of 2022, 48,000 academic workers of the University of California started a protest against wages that are disproportionately low in relation to the costs of living in the urban areas where UC campuses are located. Their nearly six-weeks long strike, described as the largest strike ever in the US higher education system, was concluded with a ratification of an agreement between the university and the bargaining unions. Around the same time, the New York's New School untenured adjunct professors and lecturers, constituting almost 90% of the faculty, joined a walkout that led to canceling nearly all classes for three weeks and, consequently, brought about a tentative collective bargaining agreement to improve their working conditions.

At the first glance, we could roughly divide these practices into two types of initiatives: those concentrating on calculated efforts to realize a common goal (e.g., preserving the excellence of work) and those concentrating on spontaneous resistance against common threats. We argue that both types are unsatisfactory, the first being too broad and the second being too particularized to foster a positive, consistent and autonomous course of action, which is necessary to induce sustainable changes within higher education institutions. Instead of adopting the perspective of threats and efforts, we would like to suggest the perspective of enrichment and show how members of the broadly understood academic community can meaningfully and mutually support each other in their work and contribute collectively to knowledge advancement.

If the feelings of solidarity with other members of the community appear only in face of external threats to the community, they result in short-lived protests, but often cease to exist once the threats are eliminated. Therefore, solidarity stemming from external threats is too incidental to result in a lasting, profound change to the conditions of work in higher education. Furthermore, the triggers of the protests described above, such as restrictions on academic freedom, underfinancing research, or using funding schemes to shape the direction of research, as concerning as they are, are mostly relevant for academic staff, while non-academic employees might be less incentivized to join such protests.

Similarly, if the precarious conditions of work are the source of solidarity, then those occupying top tiers in the hierarchy are unlikely to identify with such a community of interests. Solidarity thus becomes overly selective and may result in further divides. Finally, if threats intrinsic to the scholarly work, such as the unmitigable risk of erring and the retractability of scientific theories should be the source of academic solidarity, then it excludes a large part of the community that is not directly engaged in the pursuit of knowledge.

However, a broader institutional framework also does not suffice to create a prolonged and extended sense of solidarity. Apart from

professional goals, all members of the community bring with them their personal ambitions. The advancement of knowledge, even if it is one of the most important missions of higher education institutions, may not be an imperative for all their employees. The realization of a universal and common goal, hinted at in the very name of a "university," seems to be too fuzzy to be appealing. This echoes Rorty's seminal work on solidarity, in which he criticized applying metaphysical universalism to the concept of solidarity. He suggested that "our sense of solidarity is the strongest when those with whom solidarity is expressed are thought of as 'one of us,' where 'us' means something smaller and more local than the human race." If sharing a common goal (deepening our knowledge of the world or correcting our previous misconceptions of how it functions) is the impulse to create a community, it is not clear how this goal could effectively withstand numerous, often conflicting goals of particular members of the community.

What can still be done

After critical investigations into the existing instances of community building in higher education institutions, it is due time to conclude them with a proposal that would help remedy the challenges discussed in the preceding section. It should not be purely negative (community uniting against something), but it should also be flexible enough not to rely solely on one commonly shared goal, since identifying such a goal within a diverse, international community is not feasible. The goals of the academic community should not be too specific so that they remain relatable and appealing for differing individuals but they cannot be too vague if they are still to be generally desirable.

Recognition of both a common position (shaped by external and internal hazards) and a common effort to deliver outcomes despite these threats is the first step in the process of reconstructing a frame for the academic community. The second step, after accounting for shared characteristics, is to deliberate how they can be best shared and harnessed to community building. Collaboration between academic and professional service staff is crucial in establishing a community around knowledge advancement, which becomes a more inclusive and participatory endeavor. Such collaboration acknowledges and respects the contributions of different members. Evidence suggests that the relations between these two groups can be nourished through frequent joint meetings (Ryttberg and Geschwind) and engaging professional service staff in the education of students (Cox and Verbaan). Professional service staff are also often engaged in delivering formal education to academics on policy trends that have implications for research, such as research data management (Joo and Schmidt), or science communication. The interaction of these two groups through professional education is deemed beneficial. Furthermore, members of the professional service staff are often part of networks that can provide access to various forms of social and financial capital.

However, as Rhoades points out, members of the academic staff are generally unaware of these resources and sides of managerial professionals ("Envisioning invisible workforces: enhancing intellectual capital"). This collaboration is likewise critical and can mitigate the negative effects of working under pressure in a highly hierarchical environment where professional values are increasingly under threat by market forces.

The solution we propose is to identify for the academic community one umbrella objective that unites their manifold goals, incorporates their plans and hopes, and allows the discussion, negotiation, and realization their ambitions. Not all ideals of work are commonly shared, but one could be: that of mutual learning for knowledge advancement. Higher education offers institutionalized spaces of learning, which have been created for the very purpose of knowledge acquisition, be it by the way of study, research, discussion, or experiment, and they have retained this purpose up to this day. The understanding of this purpose, however, is evolving and sensitive to personal values. Hence, the lofty language of "deepening knowledge," "intellectual exploration," and "personal development" as we know it from higher education institutions' self-presentations is often not relatable enough to develop a sense of belonging to a community and the readiness to contribute to the welfare of its members. Mutual learning for the well-being of oneself and of others, on the other hand, covers nearly all possible personal objectives while remaining faithful to the ideal of higher education. In its capacity to include various goals of various people, it has the potential to become the source of meaningful joint efforts to advance the good of the academic community. It also offers ways for delicate activism and subtle contestation of existing power relations in academia and its market orientation (Kaplan and Davidoff). As Berg and Seeber note, "because research is what gains most visibility in the current university, it offers a particularly fertile site for resistance. We can choose how we talk about our scholarship to each other and more publicly" (58). It is again noteworthy that external communications about research, and the image of higher education institutions that they convey, are the shared responsibility of academic and non-academic staff. In the conscious act of making their work accessible to others, they can also strengthen their self-understanding as members of one learning community.

By "mutual learning" we do not mean the concept of life-long learning that reinforces the precarity of academic life by disposing workers to constantly acquire new skills to remain employable. This is an individualistic perspective boosted by the meritocratic discourse present on campuses. We suggest adopting the perspective of the community in which work goals and work cultures are not artificially separated. By mutual learning, we mean a commitment to the intellectual development and well-being of others, which means offering them as much support in their intellectual pursuits as we would expect ourselves. When I expect the university to be a place where I can flourish, then I must strive to make it

such a place for others as well. bell hooks noted in *Teaching to Transgress* that "if professors are wounded, damaged individuals, people who are not self-actualized, then they will seek asylum in the academy rather than seek to make the academy a place of challenge, dialectical interchange, and growth" (165). A good starting point is an examination of one's own expectations: What kind of support do I hope for? What kind of actions do I find necessary? Which are institutionally embedded and which are more personal? Which are accessible to me as an engaged actor?

The sense of community and solidarity among academic and non-academic staff is something they choose, not something imposed upon them. Membership in a community is only meaningful when contributions to the community are voluntary and deliberate. However, with the typical academic workload and number of responsibilities required to work within higher education, choosing to grow one's community may seem to be one more task to tackle. Not everybody has the resources for such intellectual and emotional generosity. Even if we arrive at certain conclusions upon the examination of our own expectations of academia, the questions remain: Could I offer similar support to my colleagues? Do I have the time and the capacity to do it? Am I fine with the aspect of activism and resistance that it entails? Can I hope for reciprocity?

From a policy perspective, solidarity and collaboration for knowledge advancement can be facilitated through funding instruments for research. Research funding programs need to place stronger emphasis on societal impact, multidisciplinarity, collaborative work, open access, and the participation of a wider range of stakeholders in defining and implementing research agendas. Such attempts are already visible in several initiatives, including Horizon Europe, the Community-University Research Alliance program in Canada, the Knowledge Exchange Framework in the UK, and the National Science Foundation's Broader Impacts initiative in the US. These initiatives may indirectly forge closer relations between academic and non-academic staff. For instance, the latter can support the former by writing research proposals that incorporate societal- and scientific-impact. Non-academic staff could also play an important role in science communication and research dissemination activities.

From an institutional point of view, that could also mean creating trade unions for both academic and non-academic staff. Framing the university, not as a distinguished social institution that has a significant mission, but first and foremost as a workplace, offers a rich ground for change and reform that could further reinforce the sense of solidarity. Such an organizational structure stays in line with the perspective of enrichment we propose, which essentially involves the question of what one can do to make the work of others in their environment safer and more satisfying. When higher education institutions tend to advance moral statements about their own position in order to mystify their corporate agenda, a truly moral statement would be to unite and question this agenda and to

propose—and test—alternatives. Creating favorable conditions for exchange between academic and non-academic staff, both through top-down and bottom-up initiatives, would already present a refreshing alternative to the hierarchical structure that prevails in higher education.

Another area of much needed institutional reform refers to doctoral education, given the crucial role it plays in socializing young scholars into the academic community. Doctoral education needs to place more emphasis on multidisciplinarity, collaboration, and the role of collective work in the advancement of useful knowledge. Similarly, doctoral education, mirroring the characteristics of the academic community, needs to move away from an obsession with publication counts, and instead create learning opportunities for the advancement of socially impactful research. Therefore, young scholars need to be exposed to training opportunities that address more collective models of knowledge development (such as collaborative or community-driven research) and learn how to disseminate this knowledge beyond academia so that it reaches and benefits a wider audience.

Conclusion

Recognizing that opportunities for learning are multifaceted and often unexpected, we want to conclude by making a strong case for collaboration that is unrestricted by professional and disciplinary divides. We believe that both academic and non-academic workers have the knowledge, skills, and experiences to enrich and inform the work of their colleagues, and to make higher education institutions places where both ideas and people can flourish. The perspective of enrichment is not aiming at success because its effects are unmeasurable. It is nevertheless, we believe, worth trying to make others' work richer, more rewarding, and more compelling—not least because it can make our own work more satisfying. The practical examples of trade unions or funding schemes given above demonstrate that efforts to strengthen the academic community do not need to be charitable actions but that they do have the potential to change one's own work experience for the better. These examples also demonstrate that systemic change is required to attain the vision of a more inclusive and collaborative academic community that we advocate in this paper. At the system level, policies and funding instruments emphasizing diversity, open science, multidisciplinarity, and societal impact, have the power to foster more collaborative spaces of knowledge advancement in higher education institutions. At the institutional level, unions and incentive structures can serve as strong levers of change. Moving from a "publish or perish" reward system towards one that values collaborative and co-created research, knowledge exchange, science dissemination, teaching innovation, and societal engagement is urgently needed to align policy ambitions with individual actions. In the end, inclusivity, collaboration, and reciprocity are ideals for any work environment, not only academic, and it offers an answer to the

threats typical in the academic field. Even if the ideal is unattainable for higher education institutions, it lies within the reach of individuals building the institution.

Notes

[1] In this study, the term higher education comprises "all types of studies, training or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent state authorities" (UNESCO, "World declaration on higher education for the twenty-first century: Vision and action" 1).

[2] See for instance Lewis and Altbach; Bess and Dee; Del Favero and Bray.

Works Cited

Akerman, Katie. "Invisible imposter: identity in institutions." *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2020, pp. 126-30, doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2020.1734683.

American Association of University Professors. "Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession." Statement adopted by the Association's Council in November 2003, www.aaup.org/file/Contingent%20Appointment.pdf

Andrews, Rhys et al. "When bureaucracy matters for organizational performance: exploring the benefits of administrative intensity in big and complex organizations." *Public Administration*, vol. 95, no. 1, 2017, pp. 115-39, doi.org/10.1111/padm.12305.

Baltaru, Roxana-Diana. "Do non-academic professionals enhance universities' performance? Reputation vs. organisation." *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 44, no. 7, 2019, pp. 1183-96, doi.org/10.1080/03075079.201.

Bauer, Karen. "The front line: satisfaction of classified employees." *New Directions for Institutional Research*, no. 105, 2000, pp. 87-97, doi.org/10.1002/ir.10508.

Berg, Lawrence D. et al. "Producing anxiety in the neoliberal university." *The Canadian Geographer/Le Geographe canadien*, no. 60, 2016, pp. 168-80, doi.org/10.1111/cag.12261.

Berg, Maggie, and Barbara K. Seeber. *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy*. University of Toronto Press, 2016.

Bess, James L., and Jay R. Dee. *Bridging the Divide between Faculty and Administration. A Guide to Understanding Conflict in the Academy*. Routledge, 2014.

Bossu, Carina et al. "Professional and support staff in higher education: an introduction." *University Development and Administration. Professional and Support Staff in Higher Education*, edited by

Carina Bossu and Natalie Brown, Springer, 2018, pp. 1-8, doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6858-4_29.

Bowl, Marion, and Jonathan Hughes. "Fair access and fee setting in English universities: what do institutional statements suggest about university strategies in a stratified quasi-market?" *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2016, pp. 269-87, doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.927846.

Chatterton, Paul. "The cultural role of universities in the community: revisiting the university-community debate." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, no. 32, 2000, pp. 165-81, doi.org/10.1068/a3243.

Clark, Burton R. *The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective*. California University Press, 1986.

---. *Sustaining Change in Universities. Continuities in Case Studies and Concepts*. Open University Press, 2004.

Cohn, Jenae. "Faculty and staff often don't trust one another. How do we fix that?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 12 March 2021. www.chronicle.com/article/faculty-and-staff-often-dont-trust-one-another-how-do-we-fix-that. Accessed: 25 July 2022.

Cox, Andrew M., and Eddy Verbaan. "How academic librarians, IT staff, and research administrators perceive and relate to research." *Library & Information Science Research*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2016, pp. 319-26, doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2016.11.004.

Croucher, Gwilym, and Peter Woelert. "Administrative transformation and managerial growth: a longitudinal analysis of changes in the non-academic workforce at Australian universities." *Higher Education*, no. 84, 2021, pp. 159-75, doi.org/10.1007/s10734-021-00759-8.

Del Favero, Marietta, and Nathaniel J. Bray. "Herding cats and big dogs: tensions in the faculty-administrator relationship." *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, edited by John C. Smart, vol 25, Springer, 2010, pp. 477-541.

Ergöl, Hakan, and Siment Coşar, editors. *Universities in the Neoliberal Era: Academic Cultures and Critical Perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Ferlie, Ewan, et al. "The governance of higher education systems: a public management perspective." *University Governance: Western European Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Catherine Paradeise, Emanuela Reale, Ivar Bleiklie and Ewan Ferlie, Springer Netherlands, 2009, pp. 1-19, doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9515-3_1.

Gander, Michelle. "A descriptive study of professional staff, and their careers, in Australian and UK universities." *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2018, pp. 19-25, doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2017.1307876.

Gibbs, Paul, and Ronald Barnett, editors. *Thinking About Higher Education*. Springer, 2014.

Gibbs, Thea, and Husni Kharouf. "The value of cooperation: an examination of the work relationships of university professional services staff and consequences for service quality." *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2020, pp. 38-52, doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1725878.

Godonoga, Ana, and Cláudia S. Sarrico. "Civic and social engagement of higher education." *Oxford Bibliographies in Education*, edited by Anne Hynds, Oxford University Press, 2019. doi.org/0.1093/obo/9780199756810-0219.

Gornitzka, Åse, and Ingvild Marheim Larsen. "Towards professionalisation? Restructuring of administrative workforce in universities." *Higher Education*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2004, pp. 455-71, doi.org/10.1023/B:HIGH.0000020870.06667.f1.

Guenther, Thomas W., and Schmidt, Ulrike. "Adoption and use of management controls in higher education institutions." *Incentives and Performance*, edited by Isabell M. Welpe, Jutta Wollersheim, Stefanie Ringelhan and Margit Osterloh, Springer, 2015, pp. 361-78, doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-09785-5_22.

Han, Shin-Kap. "Tribal regimes in academia: a comparative analysis of market structure across disciplines." *Social Networks*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2003, pp. 251-80, doi.org/10.1016/S0378-8733(03)00011-X.

hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge, 1994.

Hurlburt, Steven, and Michael McGarrath. *The Shifting Academic Workforce: Where Are the Contingent Faculty?* www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Shifting-Academic-Workforce-November-2016.pdf.

Ito, Shin, and Toshiya Watanabe. "Multilevel analysis of research management professionals and external funding at universities: empirical evidence from Japan." *Science and Public Policy*, vol. 47, no. 6, 2021, pp. 747-57, doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scaa074.

Joo, Soohyung, and Gisela M. Schmidt. "Research data services from the perspective of academic librarians." *Digital Library Perspectives*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2021, pp. 242-56. doi.org/10.1108/DLP-10-2020-0106.

Kaplan, Allan, and Sue Davidoff. *A Delicate Activism – A Radical Approach to Change*. The Proteus Initiative, 2014.

Keashly, Loraleigh, and Joel H. Neuman. "Faculty experiences with bullying in higher education: causes, consequences, and management." *Administrative Theory & Practice*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2014, pp. 48-70, doi.org/10.2753/ATP1084-1806320103.

Kinman, Gail. 2014. "Doing more with less? Work and wellbeing in academics." *Somatechnics*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2014, pp. 219-35, doi.org/10.3366/soma.2014.0129.

Koryakina, Tatyana et al. "Third mission activities: university managers' perceptions on existing barriers." *European Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2015, pp. 316-30, doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2015.1044544.

Krücken, Georg, and Frank Meier. "Turning the university into an organizational actor." *In Globalization and Organization: World Society and Organizational Change*, edited by Gili S. Drori, John W. Meyer and Hokyu Hwang, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 241-57.

Lester, Jamie. *Workplace Bullying in Higher Education*. Routledge, 2013.

Lewis, Lionel S., and Philip G. Altbach. "Faculty versus administration: a universal problem." *Higher Education Policy*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1996, pp. 255-58, doi.org/10.1016/S0952-8733(96)00016-5.

McCarthy, Dermot, and Mina Dragouni. "Managerialism in UK business schools: capturing the interactions between academic job characteristics, behaviour and the 'metrics' culture." *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 46, no. 11, 2021, pp. 2338-54, doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1723524.

McKenzie, Lara. "Un/making academia: gendered precarities and personal lives in universities." *Gender and Education*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2022, pp. 262-79, doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2021.1902482.

Newfield, Christopher. "The Structure and the Silence of the Cognitariat." *Eurozine*, 5 February 2010. www.eurozine.com/the-structure-and-silence-of-the-cognitariat/?pdf. Accessed 18 August 2022.

Nowotny, Helga et al. *Re-thinking science: Knowledge and the public in an age of uncertainty*. Polity Press, 2001.

OECD. *Benchmarking Higher Education System Performance, Higher Education*, OECD Publishing, Paris. 2019. doi.org/10.1787/be5514d7-en.

---. *Resourcing Higher Education: Challenges, Choices and Consequences, Higher Education*, OECD Publishing, Paris. 2020. doi.org/10.1787/735e1f44-en.

Olssen, Mark, and Peters, Michael A. "Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: from the free market to knowledge capitalism." *Journal of Education Policy*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2005, pp. 313-45, doi.org/10.1080/02680930500108718.

Pasque, Penny A. *American Higher Education, Leadership, and Policy. Critical Issues and the Public Good*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Pollitt, Christopher, and Geert Bouckaert. *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

Pyke, Karen D. "Institutional betrayal: inequity, discrimination, bullying, and retaliation in academia." *Sociological Perspectives*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2018, pp. 5-13, doi.org/10.1177%2F0731121417743816.

Qu, Mei. "The role of grassroots administrators in building international partnerships: a multi-level governance perspective." *Learning and Teaching*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2021, pp. 1-21, doi.org/10.3167/latiss.2021.140302.

Rhoades, Gary. "Envisioning invisible workforces: enhancing intellectual capital." In *Academic and Professional Identities in Higher Education*, edited by Celia Whitchurch, pp. 53-72. Routledge, 2009. doi.org/10.4324/9780203865255-11.

---. "Faculty unions, business models, and the academy's future." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, vol. 43, no. 6, 2011, pp. 20-26, doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2011.599299.

Ridder-Symoens, Hilde de, editor. *A History of the University. Volume I: Universities in the Middle Ages*, general editor Walter Rüegg. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Rogers, John, and Eileen Schofield. "Cooperation and leadership in academia: the role of non-academics." *Leadership and Cooperation in Academia: Reflecting on the Roles and Responsibilities of University Faculty and Management*, edited by Roger Sudgen, Marcela Valania and James R. Wilson, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013, pp. 147-60.

Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Rutherford, Amanda. "Reexamining causes and consequences: does administrative intensity matter for organizational performance?" *International Public Management Journal*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2016, pp. 342-69, doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2015.1032459.

Ryttberg, Malin, and Lars Geschwind. "Professional support staff at higher education institutions in Sweden: roles and success factors for the job." *Tertiary Education and Management*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2017, pp. 334-46, doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2017.1322631.

---. "Professional support staff in higher education: networks and associations as sense givers." *Higher Education*, vol. 78, no. 6, 2019, pp. 1059-74, doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00388-2.

Shulman, Steven. "Contingency in Higher Education: Evidence and Explanation." *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry*: Vol. 1, Article 3, 2017.

Slaughter, Sheila, and Gary Rhoades. *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education*. John Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Stage, Andreas Kjær, and Kaare Aagaard. "Danish universities under transformation: developments in staff categories as indicator of organizational change." *Higher Education*, vol. 78, no. 4, 2019, pp. 629-52, doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00362-y.

Szekeres, Judy. "Professional staff carve out a new space." *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 33, no. 6, 2011, pp. 679-91, doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2011.621193.

UNESCO. "World declaration on higher education for the twenty-first century: Vision and action," adopted at the World Conference on Higher Education, 1998, Paris. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000141952

Whitchurch, Celia. "The rise of the blended professional in higher education: a comparison between the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States." *Higher Education*, vol. 58, no. 3, 2009, pp. 407-18, doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9202-4.

Worthen, Helena, and Joe Berry. "Bargaining for 'Quality' in Higher Education: A Case Study from the City Colleges of Chicago." *Labor Studies Journal*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2002, pp. 1-23, doi.org/10.1177/0160449X0202700301.f.