



EDITORS' PICK—BOOK REVIEW: *INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION: RENEWING THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR*

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Macfarlane, B. 2012. *Intellectual leadership in higher education: Renewing the role of the university professor*. New York: Routledge 160 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-56081-8

Bruce Macfarlane's *Intellectual Leadership in Higher Education* is a succinct work and one worth reading. In this very brief book, Macfarlane seeks to redefine the terms and nature of intellectual leadership within the university. One could see this as an unenviable task, given the enormous scope of the subject: intellectual values, leadership, and the shape and direction of the modern university. Yet Professor Macfarlane, an Associate Faculty member for Higher Education at the University of Hong Kong, articulates a very clear stance. He believes that modern universities are adrift, that core values of academic freedom and duty are being jeopardized because senior faculty are relinquishing traditional roles of leadership to a hard management style more concerned with measurable data than original thinking. Macfarlane sees the rise of corporate intellectual leadership as counterproductive to originality and creativity in academic life. The diminishment of blue-sky research and compromised teaching by senior faculty is leading to levels of mediocrity that can be expected when administrators rather than educators hold the reins of power. Academics have become too busy with administrative duties handed down from above, and have allowed themselves to drift into a managed state of marginal leadership within their own communities. *Intellectual Leadership* provides an excellent primer on expanded definitions of academic leadership and the roles professors might reclaim.

In Macfarlane's analysis, the expansion of universities at a global level, and the attendant competition for education monies, has created unrelenting pressure on academics to perform according to, and be judged by a set of metrics focused on grants raised, citations counted, and the type of research that is leading to the "commercialization and corporatization of academic labor." This trend, he observes, has led to a retreat from engagement—a retreat from the traditional role of intellectual leadership. Macfarlane is concerned with the disposition and skills that academic leadership requires, and is bold enough to offer a proscription. He also notes, in a nod to the 21st century, that university communities, thanks to the rise of digital media, are no longer the only critical voices heard on any number of issues, further eroding the authority and status that was once the sole province of university professors.

The emphasis of renewed leadership duties is placed squarely on the desks of full or chair professors who are expected to have the responsibility, formally and informally, to lead others. Macfarlane's concern with senior academics, which—as a community of peers—are expected to lead through example, is a sound methodology which leads to a tightly focused discussion on the values of academic freedom and academic duty. These two values are the guideposts upon which the book's notions of leadership derive. One is reminded of Camus's belief that civility is the true anchor-pin of enlightened culture, and that expressions of tolerance would do much to soothe the balm of a troubled world. This viewpoint could seem naïve if Macfarlane's analysis and proscriptions were not grounded in the reality of the modern academic environment. He cites the paucity of literature defining and giving substance to what actually constitutes intellectual leadership, as opposed to the managerial, top-heavy administrative structures that exist on so many

campuses today, and the voluminous literature these structures have spawned. The basis of his research (on defining intellectual leadership) was carried out through a traditional methodology of interviews and surveys (of UK based professors). He also employed an interesting strategy of analyzing the obituaries of leading academics to illustrate perceptions of what is deemed important over the duration of an academic career.

The book is divided into four sections: **Leadership and Intellectuals, The Entrepreneurial Academy, Freedom and Duty**, and **Reengagement**. It is in the third section, with its short chapters on professorship, freedom, and duties, that Macfarlane brings home his main point. He writes that the genesis of the book lay in the scant literature on what it means to *be* a professor in relation to formal duties and activities, as opposed to *how* to become a professor. That many in the academic world are highly trained specialists in their respective subject disciplines is of course obvious. It is one of many reasons to pursue education at the doctoral level. But as any undergraduate can and will tell you, subject mastery does not automatically equate with good teaching, engagement, or campus leadership. Because of the pressures of working in an entrepreneurial academy, Macfarlane sees a loss, or compromising, of academic freedom: an unbalanced emphasis on applied research with corporate sponsorship stifles original thought and creativity. Whether one agrees with Macfarlane or not, it is true that terms such as knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange have become lingua franca when discussing the missions of the modern university, and, as such, they reduce college campuses to mere assets of intellectual wealth rather than dynamic centers of thought and learning.

Throughout the book, Macfarlane examines the ideals and stereotypes surrounding academic life. A good example can be found in the chapter on Academic Duty (Ch. 8), where the various guises of professorship, such as Mentor, Guardian, Enabler and Ambassador, are discussed. These are the key proscriptive roles Macfarlane offers as remedy to the problems under discussion. Macfarlane takes care to set out the ideal, discuss the stereotype, and take into account the expectations of the roles, keeping the discussion balanced with notes of realism. An interesting revelation from Macfarlane's research was the finding that, among the professorship interviewed, academic identity is more aligned with subject discipline, rather than with institutional objectives. Is this surprising? Should it be? Do people identify more with their profession than their place of work? According to Macfarlane, yes it is surprising, and a cause for concern. In this he finds evidence for the drift of leadership into a co-opted managed state, with administrators or paraprofessionals forging the direction of universities instead of its senior academics. This becomes a major part of the crisis in intellectual leadership under examination.

Although one of *Intellectual Leadership's* strengths is its brevity, a welcome addition would have been the inclusion in the index of the survey instruments used to conduct the research. Also, though it is clear that the bulk of the work references the British system of higher education, one wonders whether this is sufficient for the comprehensive approach the book takes toward the subject. A discussion or chapter on how Macfarlane's findings are applicable to Europe, Asia, or North America would strengthen the work and perhaps expand its appeal. *Intellectual Leadership in Higher Education: Renewing the Role of the University Professor* takes a critical stance at a much needed time. The drift towards hard management practices at the university level is observable; the competition for education dollars is a reality. Professor Macfarlane, in his analysis and proscription, is certain of one thing: the drift and its correction are in the hands of the professoriate.