



Against Service Shaming

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Rhianna, an associate professor in the humanities I interviewed, described being bullied by her department chair. The chair criticized her for producing service publications, dismissively saying they were “taking time away from research publications” deemed essential for earning tenure. This encounter left Rhianna, an unapologetic public scholar, with self-described “rage” in addition to “serious health problems, which I’m sure were tied to the stress of all the bullying I was experiencing at work.”

This dynamic Rhianna endured is but one varied experience linked to a widespread yet unexamined phenomenon I’m calling service shaming: the act of discouraging or devaluing faculty participation in service work. Through 119 revealing interviews with faculty at three public research universities, I learned that academia’s disregard for faculty service—**especially compared to research and teaching**, and **most notably during promotion and tenure decisions**—creates toxic, counterproductive and unhealthy work environments. Service shaming deepens the disconnect between academia’s ideals and practices, undermining higher education’s potential for greater public impact.