About The Philanthropy Forum

GSPIA’s Philanthropy Forum seeks to build a bridge across the University and into the world of practice, uniting those interested in philanthropy through a common exploration and active research about the field. Led by Senior Lecturer and practitioner Kathy Breschel, The Forum offers a graduate level seminar, a lecture series about The Future of Philanthropy in Uncertain Times, and The Pittsburgh Philanthropy Project. Through a book and histories, a video and web-based interactive timeline, the Project is chronicling Pittsburgh’s contributions to philanthropy and developing educational tools for students and field leaders alike.

Five GSPIA graduate students synthesized hours of video tape into the pieces and prose in this publication. These authors are: Andrew Reed, Bernadette Voga, Valerie Findley, and Abbie Campbell, who edited their work into this piece. Anne Marie Heister assisted with production. We are indebted to all: to Dean John Fereel and Associate Dean Bill Durant, to Elyse Merchier and Dr. Kevin Kasper of the Johnson Institute for Responsible Leadership, to Mariel Sappington, Lisa M., and to many others at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs for their support over these past five years.

The Philanthropy Forum

at GSPIA

Five Years of Lectures,
A Snapshot of Philanthropy

Presented by The Philanthropy Forum
at GSPIA

Celebrating five years of engaging thought leaders about the opportunities, promising practices and imperatives shaping the future of philanthropy in uncertain times.

The Future of Philanthropy in Uncertain Times
The Future of Philanthropy in Uncertain Times

In January, 2009, as the great recession widened its grip, The Philanthropy Forum at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs inaugurated a lecture series to enlarge our understanding of philanthropy’s opportunities, obligations, and limitations. Starting with a grant of $100,000, the Forum at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs inaugurated a lecture series to enlarge our understanding of philanthropy’s opportunities, obligations, and limitations. Starting in 2009, the series has been held annually and has become a significant event in the field of philanthropy.

I. Importance of Collaboration

The Importance of Collaboration Across Sectors: Successful philanthropy must harness a network of resources across a variety of sectors, since it holds the scale of resources, authority, or ability to solve complex problems alone.

Momentum Built by Collaboration: Forming coalitions presents the opportunity for collaboration across sectors and creates the momentum necessary for successful philanthropic endeavors. This may soften traditional power dynamics between grantmakers and grantseekers and bring a new perspective.

Formation of New Ideas: Through collaboration, philanthropy is able to bring together the best people with the best ideas. This enables funders to support vision and innovation in a way that can have impact on a large scale.

II. Increased Accountability & Transparency

Measurement and Ownership: Measuring the impact of investments is important to show the value of philanthropy and to keep it accountable. It is also necessary to engage stakeholders, to give them a sense of ownership and to keep them responsible in the cause.

Accountability and Openness as a Driver of Change: Accountability is needed from both those who perform philanthropy and from the philanthropic sector. Accountability is a driver of change as it asks the hard questions, and should encourage organizations to show returns and values the continuation of suboptimal practices.

III. Innovation

Strategic Adaptation: The world and its problems are dynamic and philanthropy must adapt accordingly. It must re-imagine strategies based on the lessons learned from its successes and its failures. Adaptation is therefore a tool for improvement and for mobilizing.

Patent Capital: Success in philanthropy often requires a long-term commitment to the cause. As the types of problems evolve, philanthropists should have the ability to realign their strategies and their investments.

Innovative Giving: Philanthropy transforms small gifts into big ideas. Often, it is only through innovation that philanthropists are able to reach their targeted goal in the most effective way, working through trial and error, and refining funding strategies as experience informs the work or reveals new.

Stepping in for the State: As government and other societal resources contract, some non-profits have become more competitive, philanthropy will not be able to supplant or substitute for this funding in most cases. Instead, it should seed, test, or share learnings inherent in approaches that are proportional to and appropriate for its role as society’s innovation capital.

IV. Enduring Change

The Role of Philanthropy in Policy Change: Philanthropy must not shy away from taking a role in public policy and advocacy. It is through these high impact events that philanthropy will be able to secure enduring structural change that has long-term preventative potential.

Empowering the Community to Sustain Change: Philanthropy must act to empower individuals and communities, supporting them to organize in such a way that they are able to affect their own change and assume the role of equal partners. This encourages collaboration in which all parties are aware of and operate with respect to contextual norms and values.
The Future of Philanthropy in Uncertain Times

The Fourteen Speakers

Through the words of these sector leaders, we invite you to look back at five years of philanthropic wisdom and look forward towards their visions of philanthropy’s future.

Dr. Richard Gunderman, M.D., Ph.D.
Professor of radiology, pediatrics, philosophy and philosophy at Indiana University. Gunderman has published nine books and frequently writes for The Atlantic and scholarly journals.

Sara Gould
President and CEO of the Ms. Foundation for Women at the time of her lecture, Gould is now Associate Director and Director of the CareFund Campaign for Caring Across Generations.

Grant Oliphant
Then President and CEO of The Pittsburgh Foundation, Oliphant advanced innovative new programs and writes widely about the field.

Jacqueline Novogratz
Founder and CEO of Acumen Fund, a non-profit global venture capital fund she started in 2001, Novogratz authored a memoir detailing her journey from business and mainstream philanthropy to market methods that serve the world’s poorest.

Michael Dahl
Then Managing Director for The Pew Charitable Trusts, Dahl is now the Senior Vice President of the Philadelphia Program at The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Paul Brest
Then President of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and now Co-Director of the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, Brest has co-authored several books on law and philanthropy.

Leslie Cruchfield
A former managing director of Arloha, Cruchfield is an author, speaker, and authority on high-impact philanthropy. She currently serves as a senior advisor with FSG, a nonprofit consulting firm.

Margaret McKenna
Now a Professor of Leadership at Lesley University where she served twenty-two years as President before joining the Walmart Foundation in 2007.

Gara LaMarche
Then president and CEO of Atlantic Philanthropies, LaMarche is now a Senior Fellow at New York University’s Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service.

Emmet Carson, Ph.D.
The founding President and CEO of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Carson has published more than 100 works on philanthropy, social justice, public accountability and African American giving.

Peter Frumkin, Ph.D.
Then Director of the IRC Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the University of Texas. Frumkin is now a professor of social policy at the University of Pennsylvania and serves as faculty director of the Center for High Impact Philanthropy.

Sally Osberg
President and CEO of the Skoll Foundation, Osberg is a recognized leader in advancing social entrepreneurship as a model for providing sustainable solutions to critical global challenges.

Avila Klimurray, Ph.D.
Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and Board Member of the Global Fund for Community Foundations. Klimurray has worked for women’s issues, peace building and social change.

Sterling Spirn
Then President and CEO of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Spirn spearheaded programs to help combat hunger, poverty and social injustice.

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Theme Guide

- Importance of Collaboration
- Innovation
- Increased Accountability & Transparency
- Enduring Change

... it doesn’t matter how much wealth we have; we can’t be generous unless we’re also wise and unless we understand what we’re giving to, whom we’re giving, when we’re giving and, above all, why we’re giving. 

Philanthropy has an important role to play in raising women’s voices and funding advocacy on issues from living wage to paid sick leave that benefit both women and men... (we must turn) to those whose ideas for change have not been encouraged up until now... 

As the economic downturn tests communities, philanthropists must develop tools to maintain vital services despite declining assets. New forms of technologies and outreach may help forge community resources and tackle long-term problems. 

...recognizing that our financial and aid systems are definitely broken, we have an opportunity to re-imagine, to reinvent and think about what it would take to build a real inclusive economy. 

Philanthropy started quantifying more and more to working on public policy issues. The reason is leverage - the desire to make the most social impact for the dollars you were investing. 

If we understand risk, and take an expected returns attitude approach, our risky ventures will be justified by the possibility of high payoffs. And this attitude encourages realism and candor about failure. 

How can we harness the power of business, harness market forces to our social and environmental goals? How can we leverage other NGOs, other non-profits as partners in change and how can we engage people? Ultimately, how do I get all these wheels turning together? 

Philanthropy is not just getting out a checkbook... a true partnership has to be one where people are actually a team working together to figure out the best ways to get an answer. We’ve got to figure out ways to collaborate. 

It takes persistence to achieve a victory, but it also takes persistence to stay with the cause because if you take your eye off the ball, if you wipe the dust out of your hands and go for something else, it could unravel. 

This is where we can prove to folks the worth of philanthropy. I think our window, sadly, is closing for that opportunity for leadership. It’s closing because people are no longer looking to philanthropy to play that role ... because we were silent in the moment when our voice was needed most. 

In philanthropy, the idea that you have to get it all right from the start is not correct. You can get it partially right but if you have to make adjustments, you have to tune and you have to adjust where possible. 

The power of social entrepreneurs allows us to say yes, these problems are huge. Yes, they are complex. Yes, they are getting bigger all the time. But there are people on the front lines making a powerful, powerful difference and they give us incredible hope. 

Philanthropy must work with people so that they themselves can become agents of their own change, contributing to the sustainability of that change. 

Big ideas often start with small bets or a simple hunch and a champion. They get tested or re-cooled as the learning occurs, and then scaled up as a natural part of forging new ideas. We need more of these small bets in the social sector.