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Abstract Template

TITLE:

The Road Not Taken: Friendship and the Problem of Academic Work

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Because of its high level of autonomy, academic work was traditionally viewed as intrinsically rewarding. Yet changes in higher education have weakened the personal connection to work and academic autonomy, a known indicator of happiness. Good relations with colleagues may offset the negative impact of reduced autonomy. However, evidence that collegiality is declining raises serious questions about fulfilling academic work and happiness. Drawing on the author's qualitative study of 42 academics, this paper explores the impacts of institutional change on academic work experience, focusing on relations with colleagues and work friendships. A question of special importance concerns the role of friendship in making work more meaningful by reestablishing the connection to work. This paper suggests that although friendship can contribute to social support, it has a unique potential for increasing people's happiness. The paper demonstrates that personal friendships create joy in academic work by restoring a sense of self.