

CALL FOR PAPERS

Philanthropy in Higher Education in Africa

Power, Equity, and Institutional Autonomy

Special Issue of

VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations

FORMAT

**Extended abstracts of 750
to 1,000 words**

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

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SUBMIT TO

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Guest Editors

Bhekinkosi Moyo, PhD | Anthony L. Heaven, PhD | Dennis Kilama, PhD Candidate

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Background, Aim, and Scope

This call complements an ongoing Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy project on Emerging Scholars in Philanthropy and Higher Education in Africa. Some papers from the project have been identified for possible collection into a Special Issue of VOLUNTAS focusing on Philanthropy in Higher Education in Africa. In the process of collecting these papers into a proposal, some gaps were identified that have led to the development of a call for additional papers to fill the gaps in the proposed VOLUNTAS Special Issue.

Philanthropy has become an increasingly important feature for higher education across Africa. As higher education institutions (HEIs) confront macroeconomic volatility, constrained public funding, and persistent structural pressures, they are engaging alumni, diaspora networks, philanthropic foundations, faith-based organisations, communities, and corporate actors to mobilise resources, strengthen research capacity, and widen access to education, especially for the previously disadvantaged.

Yet philanthropy in African higher education is not simply a means of closing funding gaps. Philanthropic relationships shape institutional governance, policy priorities, knowledge production, and academic freedom. Although private resources may advance public purpose and institutional capacity, they can also reinforce donor dependence, elite influence, epistemic inequality, and donor-driven agenda setting.

This call for additional papers seeks to advance scholarship on civil society, voluntary action, and the third sector by placing African higher education at the centre of comparative, conceptual, and empirical inquiry. Despite growing attention to global philanthropy and civil society dynamics (Holanda et al., 2023; Ma & Konrath, 2018), the literature continues to reflect marked geographical and theoretical imbalances in favour of Western and high-income contexts (Ma & Konrath, 2018; Wiepking, 2021).

Research published in VOLUNTAS demonstrates that philanthropy and voluntary action are shaped by complex macro-level institutions and micro-level sociocultural motivations (Barman, 2017; Wiepking, 2021; Young, 2000). By examining these dynamics within African higher education, the Special Issue will extend, refine, and challenge prevailing theories of philanthropy, governance, civil society, and institutional autonomy.

This call for additional papers is intended to complement the contributions already emerging through the Special Issue's Emerging Scholars Programme. Several important themes, institutional contexts, and geographical settings are already represented through the programme. Rather than duplicating these contributions, this call seeks to address remaining thematic, geographical, and institutional gaps in the emerging Special Issue. These gaps are outlined below.

We particularly welcome submissions that examine areas that are currently underrepresented. These include papers that focus on emerging questions at the intersection of philanthropy, the political economy of higher education, and artificial intelligence, as well as research from African countries and regions that are not currently represented in the Emerging Scholars Programme. Contributions that

extend the geographical coverage of the Special Issue, particularly from underrepresented national, linguistic, and institutional contexts, are strongly encouraged.

Priority Areas for Manuscripts

We invite theoretically grounded empirical, comparative, and conceptual manuscripts that address one or more of the following themes. Given that several themes are already represented through the Emerging Scholars Programme, priority will be given to submissions that address identified thematic, geographical, or institutional gaps and extend the scope of the Special Issue. We particularly encourage submissions from countries, regions, and institutional contexts that are not currently represented in the Emerging Scholars Programme.

1 Indigenous, Community-Based, and Horizontal Philanthropy

Formal nonprofit definitions often privilege Western institutionalised models, obscuring indigenous, informal, and communal practices of solidarity (Siddiqui, 2022; Wiepking, 2021). We welcome research on African modalities of collective giving, mutual aid, and horizontal support in tertiary education.

- Culturally embedded practices of giving, reciprocity, and solidarity that support students and institutions.
- Community-led resource mobilisation, family strategies, and peer-to-peer philanthropic mechanisms.
- Theoretical accounts of how horizontal philanthropic logics challenge or extend established definitions of voluntary action.

2 Regulatory Frameworks, Taxation, and Enabling Environments

State policy, fiscal incentives, and legal structures establish the conditions under which philanthropic actors operate (Garcia et al., 2017; Rey-Garcia, 2020; Rutzen, 2015).

- The effects of national fiscal regimes, tax incentives, and legal standards on higher education philanthropy.
- Regulation of university endowments, foundations, and cross-border or diaspora transfers.
- Interactions among regulatory regimes, civic space, and institutional autonomy.

3 Institutional Infrastructure, Endowments, and Governance

Building institutional capacity for resource mobilisation requires universities to balance donor expectations with organisational mission, public purpose, and legitimacy (Toepler, 2018; Weinryb, 2020).

- Comparative analyses of university advancement functions, foundations, and fundraising ecosystems.
- Endowments, gift-acceptance policies, and the ethical governance of philanthropic assets.
- Legitimacy, accountability, and professionalisation within university advancement and development offices.

4 Accountability, Power Dynamics, and Philanthropic Impact

Philanthropic interventions involve power relations that may affect beneficiary groups, institutional agendas, and the production of knowledge (Barman, 2017; Weinryb, 2020).

- Power asymmetries, donor conditionalities, and epistemic dominance in university-donor relationships.

- The measurement of impact and effectiveness, including whose metrics, values, and standards define success.
- Multi-stakeholder accountability among donors, university leaders, faculty, students, communities, and the public.

5 Artificial Intelligence, Philanthropy, and the Future of Higher Education

Artificial intelligence and related digital technologies are increasingly influencing how nonprofit organisations generate knowledge, engage stakeholders, mobilise resources, and make organisational decisions. Recent VOLUNTAS scholarship demonstrates growing engagement with digital transformation in nonprofit organisations (Jong & Ganzaroli, 2024), technology-mediated charitable giving (Gugenishvili & Nyström, 2024), and machine-learning approaches to understanding nonprofit behaviour (de-Miguel-Molina et al., 2024). However, the implications of these developments for philanthropy and higher education in Africa remain insufficiently explored. This theme therefore invites theoretically informed and empirically grounded research on the intersection of artificial intelligence, philanthropy, and African higher education. Topics could include:

- AI-enabled philanthropic fundraising, donor engagement, and resource mobilisation.
- Artificial intelligence and philanthropic decision-making, including donor and grant-making practices.
- Data, algorithms, transparency, and accountability in university-philanthropy relationships.
- The implications of AI for African models of philanthropy, solidarity, and collective resource mobilisation.

6 Underrepresented African Regions, Institutional Contexts, and Emerging Trends

Existing research in VOLUNTAS underscores the need to address geographical and contextual gaps in third-sector scholarship (Holanda et al., 2023; Ma & Konrath, 2018).

- Evidence from Francophone, Lusophone, and North African settings, as well as conflict-affected and fragile contexts.
- Studies of polytechnics, faith-based universities, historically disadvantaged institutions, and community colleges.

Theoretical and Methodological Expectations

To align with the scope and standards of VOLUNTAS, submissions should meet the following expectations:

- **Analytical primacy of philanthropy and voluntary action.** Higher education should serve as the site of inquiry, while the central research problem engages third-sector theory, philanthropic mechanisms, civil society, or voluntary action. For submissions addressing artificial intelligence, AI should therefore be examined in relation to philanthropic mechanisms, voluntary action, civil society, resource mobilisation, governance, or institutional autonomy rather than treated solely as a technological or educational phenomenon.
- **Substantive engagement with the literature.** Submissions should explicitly build on and contribute to debates in VOLUNTAS and related third-sector scholarship (e.g., Barman, 2017; Holanda et al., 2023; Wiepking, 2021).
- **Methodological rigour.** Qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, and conceptual studies are welcome. Comparative approaches across countries, regions, or institutional types are especially encouraged where they can advance cross-national theory building (Azarian, 2011; Holanda et al., 2023).

Abstract Submission Guidelines

Interested authors should submit an extended structured abstract of **750 to 1,000 words** by **30 October 2026**. The abstract should contain the following sections:

1. **Title and author details.** Include each author's affiliation and the corresponding author's primary email address.
2. **Research problem and context.** State the research problem clearly and identify its specific African context or institutional setting.
3. **Research questions and objectives.** Set out the questions the paper will address and its principal objectives.
4. **Theoretical or conceptual framework.** Explain the paper's theoretical grounding and its relationship to VOLUNTAS scholarship.
5. **Methodology and data.** Describe the research design, data, sampling strategy, and analytical methods, as applicable.
6. **Contribution.** Identify the anticipated conceptual, empirical, practical, or policy contribution to global philanthropy and third-sector research. Where applicable, authors should explain how the study advances understanding of emerging transformations, including digitalisation and artificial intelligence, in philanthropy and African higher education.

SUBMISSION AND ENQUIRIES

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Subject line: VOLUNTAS SI Abstract – African Higher Education Philanthropy

Important Dates and Timeline

Milestone	Target date
Call for abstracts issued	1 October 2026
Abstract submission deadline	30 October 2026
Notification of abstract decisions	Mid-November 2026
Paper development and writing	November 2026 to April 2027
First draft due to Guest Editors	30 May 2027
Full manuscript submission to the VOLUNTAS portal	30 June 2027

Note: Selected manuscripts will undergo review by the Guest Editors before formal submission to the VOLUNTAS online portal for double-blind peer review. Acceptance for publication by VOLUNTAS rests with the journal editors.

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