We are delighted to announce the winner of the 2017 Peter Dobkin Hall Prize for the most significant scholarly contribution to our understanding of the history of philanthropy taking "philanthropy" to embrace nonprofit organizations and civil society. This year's award goes to the two co-authors, Daniel R. Coquillette and Bruce A. Kimball, of *On the Battlefield of Merit: Harvard Law School, the First Century*, published by Harvard University Press.

The members of the committee (Dwight Burlingame, David Hammack, and Amanda Moniz, last year's prize winner) agreed that *On the Battlefield of Merit* stood out, in a field crowded with very good books, for the quality and thoroughness of its analysis and for the honesty and clarity of its account of the formative decades of one of the central institutions of the United States. As part of the Harvard University, Harvard Law School is a private, nonprofit organization that is located in Massachusetts and qualifies as "charitable" under American law: but it plays a key role in American civic life. And with 20 alumni who have served as justices of the U.S. Supreme courts—twice as many as second-place Yale Law school, three times as many as third-place Colombia—Harvard Law also plays a key role in American government.

*On the Battlefield of Merit* contributes to the history of American philanthropy and nonprofit effort a persuasive, balanced, incisive account of the ways Harvard Law reflected and reinforced the racial, gender, and religious prejudices that long narrowed access to competition for the prizes of American life. It documents the inadequacy of the school's intellectual quality at several points, and the limits of the quality of the education it offered. At the same time, it also documents the steps through which the school acquired a law library that can rival the best in the world, found its way toward a national perspective and a focus on pressing questions of current policy as well as of law, and eventually joined Columbia and a few other law schools in developing a distinctive approach to teaching. Unlike nearly all earlier histories of American law schools, *On the Battlefield of Merit* also pays a consistent, close, and thoughtful attention to the question of money, assessing the relative significance of donors (and the university leaders who cultivated donors), of student and their parents, of endowments, and of arrangements for paying teachers—or not paying them.

We debated giving the prize to a book by two already-highly regarded senior scholars about a university that needs no additional publicity, and who were supported by a substantial research grant. In this case, we concluded, the book throws fresh and critical light on an institution that can certainly improve. The Spencer Foundation grant has produced two results that a prize for the contributions to this history of philanthropy should certainly honor—not only an excellent book but also digital reproductions of a mass of records that will now be available to researchers everywhere. And, the senior authors have worked very effectively to write a significant book on a key topic in the history of American philanthropy, of the national nonprofit organizations that so engaged Peter Dobkin Hall, and on the American civic life in general—and to do all that in an engaging, almost compulsively readable prose.