Robert Gibbons’s research and teaching concern the design and performance of organized activities, especially “relational contracts” (informal agreements so rooted in the parties’ circumstances that they cannot be adjudicated by courts). Naturally, organized activities may occur within firms, but they may also occur between firms (e.g., supply relationships, alliances, joint ventures, and more) or beyond firms (such as in hospitals, schools, government agencies, communities, and more).

Gibbons is Sloan Distinguished Professor of Management in MIT's Sloan School and Professor in MIT's Department of Economics, where he teaches management and PhD courses (respectively) and has received teaching awards from each. Since 2002, he has been co-principal investigator of MIT Sloan’s Program on Innovation in Markets and Organizations (PIMO), whose mission is to “Change the world, by changing management, by changing management education, by changing the research that affects management education.”

Outside of MIT, Gibbons is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Econometric Society, and the Society of Labor Economists, founding director of the NBER working group in organizational economics, and a former board member of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) and of the Citicorp Behavioral Science Research Council. Since 1996, he has given doctoral mini-courses in organizational economics at Bergen, Zurich, EUI, Pompeu Fabra, Nanterre, Tinbergen Institute, Shanghai Jiao Tong, Sorbonne, Hitotsubashi, UNSW, Chicago, and Goethe (Frankfurt). And starting in 2016, he will co-lead (with Woody Powell) a sequence of multi-disciplinary summer institutes at CASBS on organizations and their effectiveness.

In addition to writing papers, Gibbons has written one book, co-edited another, and is writing a third. His text Game Theory for Applied Economists (Princeton University Press, 1992) has been translated into Chinese, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish; he co-edited The Handbook of Organizational Economics with John Roberts (Princeton University Press, 2013); and his forthcoming Introduction to Organizational Economics (Princeton University Press, 2017) is intended to make the field accessible to a broad set of theoretical and empirical economists and other researchers.