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TO INSERT CONTENTS, TYPE "CONTENTS" AND F3

Editorial: <i>LET THEM EAT CAKE</i>	2
<i>VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS</i> President's Message; Annual Meetings	8
<i>SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DIS-EASE</i> — Testing Negative for Common Sense an essay by <i>Theophilus Whiteman</i>	9
<i>ACADEMIC STANDARDS</i>	13
<i>BOOK REVIEW</i> <i>Generation X Goes to College</i>	14
<i>READERS' COMMENTS & RESPONSES</i> Down on sports? Punishing athletes... HIV and AIDS	18

DEPARTMENTS & SIDEBARS:

VASNET.....	6
Josef Martin's Tip.....	7
JOSEF MARTIN PRIZE	19
Quotes.....	3,5,12,16,21

Virginia Association of Scholars: President, Prof. Michael I. Krauss
School of Law, George Mason University, 3401 N. Fairfax Dr., Arlington, VA 22201
mkrauss@vms1.gmu.edu • PHONE (703) 993-8000 FAX 8088
Virginia Scholar: Editor, Henry H. Bauer
1306 Highland Circle, Blacksburg, VA 24060-5623
hhbauer@vt.edu • (540) 951-2107

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Editorial **LET THEM EAT CAKE**

the thoughtless saying of a great princess, who, on being informed that the country people had no bread, replied,

*“Let them eat cake” **

Malevolent rulers aren't needed for revolutions to get brewed, it suffices when the rulers are out-of-touch enough, for long enough, with what's actually happening under their rule.

Some administrators like to talk of themselves as **serv**ing those whom they administer. They often mean what they say – or believe they do, or deceive themselves that they do. Few, however, stay sufficiently in touch with the realities experienced by their administrees, and so they become increasingly irrelevant, self-defeating, or even worse: a major part of the problems.

One of the most cherished compliments I received while I was a Dean came from a faculty member who said, in quite evident astonishment, that he had never met a Dean who understood faculty attitudes as I seemed to. Serving as Dean had never seemed to me a different career than being a professor¹: both roles bear precisely the same responsibility, to place academic matters – learning, teaching, scholarship – ahead of everything else. That's what universities are for.

Administrators who do not continue to teach, study, and mix with faculty soon forget what the trench-warfare is like. Two decades ago I told our Provost that he should move his office and that of the President into one of the non-administrative buildings so that they could experience day-to-day what it is like for faculty to try to work in non-air-conditioned, often over-heated and under-ventilated cubby-holes, as was the fate of our English Department and a few others. My suggestion was not adopted. Since then, many of the offices in the Administration Building, including the Provostial and Presidential suites, have been expensively re-decorated **several times**; while the English Department still awaits relief.

Quite often, of course, executives and appa-

ratchiks quite deliberately avoid knowing what the score is, trying thereby to preserve “deniability”. A recent, uproariously laughable instance comes from Virginia Tech's University Architect Michael Hedgepeth. There have been public protests in newspapers on and off campus ever since the university announced plans to build a view-blocking bridge over the wide “Mall” that serves as the university's flagship entrance with its fine vista to the unusual War Memorial above its chapel, the War Memorial that is also featured on the university's Seal. Hedgepeth, however, “is not aware of any complaints. Everyone we've talked to is fully in support of the building” ².

That illustrates, of course, only how careful he has been, who he talks to. As to the charge that the Board of Visitors was not fully apprised of the visual consequences of the building, Hedgepeth said that “Those visuals did make it to a portion of the Board”. A “portion of the Board”, of course, could be interpreted as not having to include any human beings. Anyway, the University Architect said, “the new building will not block the War Memorial for viewers within a reasonable distance” – but naturally he failed to define “reasonable distance”.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

In the corporate world, CEOs have increasingly become a class entirely separate from other workers in their company. Typically CEOs are hired in from elsewhere, so that they have no feel or loyalty for the traditional culture of the company. And they behave as though the other workers in the corporation were a different breed: for example when IBM's CEO received a bonus of \$8,000,000 in the same year as he down-sized by taking jobs away from 8,000 (or was it 80,000?) former employees.

The “non-profit” sector has seen the same developments. Health-insurance companies (Trigon in Virginia, for instance) and hospitals³ convert from

THE ONLY THING NECESSARY FOR THE TRIUMPH OF EVIL

IS FOR GOOD MEN TO DO NOTHING

not-for-profit to for-profit, at tremendous immediate and direct profit to the managerial class. Those who will **not** profit from the new arrangements are those whom the managers were supposed to be representing, namely those who receive the medical attention for whose cost they imagined they had been “insured”. It is precisely the same as with the notorious leveraged buy-outs, the associated “junk” bonds, the Savings-&-Loan scandals: there is no generally understood sense of stewardship or public responsibility, let alone *noblesse oblige*. Today’s managers, executives, “representatives” see their employees, share-holders, or constituents not as ones to be served but as ones to be fleeced.

The same phenomenon, naturally on a somewhat more modest scale, is on view in academe. Typically Presidents are hired in from outside and acquire little institutional loyalty during their typically few years at the helm. There are now universities where the presidential salary is **an order of magnitude greater** than the average full professor’s salary – not to speak of the free housing, free transportation, special retirement provisions, special health insurance schemes, and more, that Presidents but not professors get. Even in public universities, presidential salaries and perks are now 3 or more times the remuneration of the average full professor.

How can one who lives in that presidential style remember that, for example, the imposition of a \$40 annual parking fee poses serious problems for the clerical, technical, and janitorial staff?

How can an inhabitant of an Administration Building be aware that there is not enough money in the academic departments for the basic necessities of phone, postage, and copying?

Throughout the Commonwealth, indeed throughout the United States, academe is experiencing hard economic times. Faculty in academic departments have become used to

- increasing work loads as the number of faculty declines, as those who retire or resign are not replaced;
- inadequate secretarial services, as the number of staff also declines; so that many or most faculty do their own correspondence, typing and copying of exams, and so on;

- lack of classroom support: faculty have to bring their own chalk, erase the boards themselves before their class, set up projectors and video players themselves (and come prepared with something else to do for those times when the equipment doesn’t work);
 - restricted support services (or complete lack of them) for locating and getting source materials, making slides or copying illustrations or tapes;
 - restrictions on the use of copying machines;
 - exhortations not to use long-distance phones;
 - restrictions or bans on FAXing, Federal Express, and the like;
 - lack of funds to bring visiting speakers;
 - lack of funds for professional travel;
- and that is far from a complete inventory of the circumstances that are causing an increasing proportion of faculty and staff in academic departments to feel that their work is not supported, let alone appreciated.

Clerical and maintenance staff, repair-service personnel who roam our campuses, and other visitors who meet faculty and staff know that the level of morale among the workers – the staff and the faculty – is very low indeed.

Those who speak with upper-level students or recent graduates know of their frequent complaint that curricula and course offerings make it often difficult for many of them to satisfy requirements in order to graduate in the theoretically possible minimum time.

An increasing number of faculty and staff find themselves thinking and speaking ill rather than well about their place of work. Traditional loyalty and feelings of communality are giving way to alienation. How sad it is to talk with people who have given decades of dedicated effort, who took enormous pride in the institutions in which they served – and who now are disappointed, even disgusted with the turn of events. Few things have I found more depressing over the last half-a-dozen years than the succession of former faculty and administrators who have turned from ebulliently supportive of their university to sour and disbelievingly negative: some of the most dedicated teachers, distinguished researchers, faithful stewards and executives. Some samples:

Budget cuts have also rocked higher ed in New York.... Campus presidents and administrators,

A word to (not from!) the wise

We are a patriarchal society,
and the obsession with thinness
is a way to keep women down

Carol Bailey, ass. prof. of sociology
VIRGINIA TECH 16 #4, summer 1994, p. 7

instead of kicking up a fuss, have tried to curry political favor... and proudly announced that they're taking the opportunity "to make SUNY leaner, meaner and even better." We are generally most angry at these people. We're moving to a closed stacks library and all of the university services are trying to figure out ways not to be responsible for things; it is absolutely impossible to get anything done, like get a departmental computer fixed.... Jokes have started to circulate in the English Department about charging the Engineering Department a special fee to teach their students how to write.... As at VT, morale is plummeting

After twelve years as a professor [at a university in Virginia]... [and] five years of budget cuts, flat salaries (reductions, in real terms), fewer resources, increased teaching loads, and unreasonable expectations to hustle dollars for the administration [he left].⁵

A high proportion of professors have developed a very cynical attitude: It's no use protesting the administration. Get what you can out of the institution and don't cause problems⁶

One group of people is singularly unaware of the low state of morale: the administrative class. Like the great princess, their refrain is, "Let them eat cake".

Another group of people is entirely wrong in its diagnosis of problems and offering of solutions: the "experts" on education, "information technology", management and personnel relations. The educationists tout one newfangled notion after another, refusing to recognize that learning **and the development of self-esteem among the learners** proceeded much better for many more people when **achievement in learning was the only direct goal** of schools and colleges. The management experts float in their virtual reality of mission statements, strategic plans, evaluations, and other endless make-believe make-work even as confusion in the real world becomes ever more confounded. And the experts on personnel relations seem intent to ignore all that experience and common sense can teach about how to deal effectively with people.

It is in academe just as on the national scene: the general working public – the huge majority that is silent only because it has found no public voice, no individual or group that promises genuine leadership – is dispirited by the ignorance of actual circumstances that characterizes so many of those who still seek public office. The most respected Senators and Congresspeople retire well before their time, just as do the best college faculty. Too many of those who remain seem marked by unwillingness or inability to

face the real problems, by blatant self-interest rather than a desire to serve, by ineffective shilly-shallying as they try to please one noise-maker after another.

“How about a bit of hard evidence to back up your diatribe?” would be a justified reaction to these words. Well, so far as colleges are concerned, consider the circumstances of the administrative class and their groupies, by contrast to those of staff and faculty:

- While faculty and staff labor under increasingly heavy loads of **things that *must be done*** – meeting classes, say, or responding to administrative memoranda and questionnaires – where are the President, Vice-President, or Dean at a university in the United States who must do their own correspondence because of insufficient secretarial assistance? Or who are forbidden from FAXing or FedExing or long-distance phoning or using the copy machine? Or who must make their own slides and transparencies for the talks they give? Or who must pay their own way to professional conferences?
- Is there in any college in the country an athletic director, coach, or other athletic administrator who suffers these restrictions that academic faculty and staff do?

It is not, repeat **not**, and once more **NOT** that the fiscal resources are lacking to provide the needed support for teaching and learning: it is simply that the priorities for spending the available resources always seem to be placed elsewhere.

“How about some hard evidence to back up **that** allegation?”, it would not be unreasonable to ask at this point – not unreasonable, that is to say, for someone who is not a faculty or staff member of an academic department or an attentive reader of *Virginia Scholar* (see especially #1 p.8ff.; #2, p.13ff.; #3 pp.3, 6, 11ff.; #4 p.5ff., 11ff.; #5, p.17f.; #6 p.17; #7, pp.9, 13f.; #8, pp.8-9):

- Six-figure sums get wasted annually just on a single campus through the proliferation of memos (for example urging that we economize on paper), newsletters, bulletins, pamphlets, and other self-advertisements, **the overwhelming majority of which can be found in the waste-baskets immediately underneath the mailboxes into which they get delivered**, having entered those “round files” without making much impression on their addressees.
- Prizes of extra operating funds, 5-figure sums⁷, are awarded to a few academic departments even

as **all** departments lack **bare necessities**.

(And leaving aside the misplaced priority, consider the inherent sheer stupidity of fixed-sum prizes when operating budgets of academic departments differ by factors of more than an order of magnitude! The first prize of \$20,000 would double the annual budget of many a small Humanities department but would only increase by a few percent that of one of the large Engineering or Science departments.)

- Speaking of \$20,000, that's available in the form of Curriculum Mini-Grants* of up to \$1500 each "to provide assistance to faculty in developing, implementing, and infusing their courses with substantive international content". Ponder the amount of people-time taken up in devising the program, disseminating the information about it, writing proposals, reviewing proposals, disseminating results of projects... And then consider how very much more could be bought if a few selected courses were chosen to receive that sum of money for very specific substantive things, like buying slides and overheads of historical or artistic or natural objects in various parts of the world —**which the present inadequate budgets in many units do not allow us to do.**
- In excess of \$1.25 million is available "to fund group or individual projects implementing strategies to increase the quality of research, graduate programs, retention and recruitment of the best graduate students, etc. [To be funded are] about fifty projects... in the \$10,000 - \$50,000 range" ⁹.

One rationale for this neatly named **ASPIRES** program is to enhance the ability to compete for external grants. But what reason is there to believe that any such projects could actually improve anyone's ability to compete for grants when every college in the United States is getting more and more desperate as the available grant funds decrease at a faster rate than the number of applicants?

More fundamentally, though, is it not the continuing **normal** departmental and individual business to "increase the quality of research,

graduate programs, retention and recruitment of the best graduate students, etc."? What is the sense of an arrangement in which **all departments are shorn of necessary funds** that they traditionally used for those very purposes, whereupon they must then compete for them? Time gets wasted on writing proposals, whose construction is determined not by substantive matters but by trying to anticipate what the proposal evaluators want. More time was wasted originally in conceiving, designing, and broadcasting the competition. Yet more time is wasted in reading and evaluating the proposals. No doubt the recipient departments will also be required to write reports demonstrating how useful the awards were....

Double-Take

An essay* in the *Roanoke Times*,
"It's time to legalize marijuana",
identified its author as
"a self-employed entrepreneur".

A lot of directly useful learning and research could get done in the time and with the money that this scheme will eat up.

- Half-a-million dollars or so enables a Committee for Student Success to fund projects for "direct support to students in their learning and motivation... [or] that expand the capacity of the faculty and staff to better serve student learning"; in order to "enhance undergraduate-student success... [and] to mold the culture of the university to focus on learning".

Repeat here, *mutatis mutandis*, the commentary just made on the ASPIRES program. But above all, what would most enable us to focus on learning would be if academic departments were adequately funded with the basic necessities. Do administrators really not know that **the faculty inherently want to help toward student success!?** There's no need for special incentives. Just give us the tools, and we will finish the job. Stop wasting our time with memos, competitions, evaluations, mission statements, focus groups and other make-work: just give us the basics for copying stuff for our classes, some help with audio-visual presentations, enough resources to communicate regularly with our peers across the world, and we'll do everything in our power to help students learn.

It is insulting and demeaning for administrators so clearly to imply through these schemes that faculty will only teach and advise if they are tempted to it by large enough financial inducements.

* John T. Jordan, "It's time to legalize marijuana", *Roanoke Times* 96:1:12, p. A10

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS

VAS members can communicate with one another through the electronic bulletin board, VASNET, set up for us by Steven Eagle.

To subscribe: send the following message to listproc@gmu.edu:

subscribe vasnet {your full name}

To unsubscribe: send the following message to listproc@gmu.edu

unsubscribe vasnet

The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Vigilance must be translated into action.

VAS exists to make action possible.

VASNET enables us to act promptly when necessary, by keeping one another informed about what's happening and about what needs to be done. Join up now.

You may not need to use the list often, but if you do it will be invaluable.

Please help The Cause

Share Virginia Scholar with as many people as you can. Pass it around. Tell us where to send complimentary copies. We have extras of most of the back issues. Ask us for a bunch and **send them to the Departments on your campus** with a request that they be circulated among the faculty.

ments over and above their salaries. How long ago is it that the people who conceive such contrivances were themselves professors? Were **they** then unwilling to do their job without extra inducements? Are they perhaps still now inclined that way?

I've been in academe for 4 decades, and very rarely indeed have I met a faculty member or a school-teacher who was not idealistic about teaching. I've encountered a great number, though, whose idealism has been transformed to cynicism by mal-administrators.

Nowadays, much turning to cynicism stems not only from administrative incompetence and silliness but also from the cultural change exemplified by students of "Generation X", comprising many "students" who simply don't study¹⁰. But educationists and administrators are willfully refusing to acknowledge that instructors cannot produce learning in students who refuse to study, who demand to be entertained and to be

given good grades as a matter of course. So proposals are solicited for ways to improve student performance **without demanding anything of the students themselves!** Socrates twists slowly in his grave, and visiting alien intelligences are dumbfounded.

- Millions of dollars **in excess of revenues** are spent on "intercollegiate athletics"; for example, "the Hokies will spend about \$17 million on athletic construction... [plus] a recreation complex that will include an artificial-turf field the football Hokies will use for practice" ¹¹. (For exhaustive data detailing that all but the most prominent **handful** of intercollegiate athletic programs costs more than its revenues bring, see Murray Sperber, *The Athletic Department vs. the University*¹² and Richard Sheehan, *Keeping Score: The Economics of Big-Time Sports*¹³).
- Six-figure sums are handed out to encourage faculty and departments to mount conferences¹⁴, in order to support the Conference Centers that every university aspires to control.
- Millions of dollars are spent on "study centers" overseas.
- Untold sums are spent on attempted social engineering along politically correct lines. This gains such fine publicity as editorials headed "Money for Sex at Tech?" ¹⁵ – "But fear not. There is no funding crisis.... It's Women's Month [and audiences can enjoy]... a performance poet... who draws from her life experiences as a working-class, Southern Appalachian African-American lesbian feminist.... President's Conference on Sexism on Campus.... 'The Sexual Politics of Meat'.... 'Perverting Evolutionary Narratives of Heterosexual Masculinity; or, Getting Rid of the Heterosexual Bug'.... 'frank and articulate' interviews about 'racism, bisexuality, and S&M' – not to mention 'compulsory heterosexuality.' No school that actually was short of cash would spend money on something like that... Would it?"

Money must be spent on PC folderol even when no-one can think of how usefully to spend it: "Diversity Enhancement Project... developed by the college diversity committee.... A request for proposals was made last year; however none were received. [Available is]... a minimum of \$10,000... [and] more may be made available". Among the innovative activities the committee envisages are "to sponsor faculty members' attendance at a national diversity conference or workshop". Small

comfort to the faculty who cannot find support to attend professional, disciplinary conferences. These illustrations, mind you, are not the only ones **known to anyone on our campuses even without access to the institution's detailed budget!**

Not that Virginia is alone or unique. Indeed, one of the characteristics of American academe is the rapidity with which fads spread. Thus the National Science Foundation will give 10 top research universities \$500,000 each as Recognition Awards for the Integration of Research and Education (**RAIRE**)¹⁶ – once again, a cutesy acronym is the best thing about the whole program. Is there anyone who genuinely believes that these awards will have any influence whatsoever in modifying behavior or circumstances at research universities? Surely that \$5,000,000 is pure eyewash, intended to placate legislators who question how seriously the NSF takes the task of encouraging teaching rather than conniving to make it neglected by comparison to research.

And, after all, why not? It's not as though the people who designed that program were spending their own money. And if it helps to make their own sinecures more secure, how could it have been better spent?

With such national examples, it need be no surprise that so many administrators at universities and colleges, too, spend money to boost their public image and reputation, ignoring what happens to the teaching and research programs they're supposed to minister to. After all, they move from one institution to another every few years, and need to think about their résumés. So more and more we hear, "Let them eat cake" – from those who have plenty of cake, seemingly oblivious that they are speaking to ones who have no bread.

Leadership, it used to be widely understood, is authentically exercised only by example. Leaders, it used to be taken for granted, accept responsibility and blame for deficiencies alleged among those they lead. But where among our university and college presidents and school superintendents and school principals are they who accept responsibility for the deficiencies in instruction alleged by outsiders? Where are they who lead by example those who do the actual work of instruction? Where are they, who are authentic leaders and not political wind-vanes and apparatchiks?

Endnotes:

* *Rousseau, Confessions, Book VI*

"This remark is usually attributed to Marie Antoinette, after her arrival in France in 1770, but the sixth book of the *Confessions* was written two or three years before that date"

– John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed., 436n

¹ See Chapter 1 in *To Rise Above Principle: The Memoirs of an Unreconstructed Dean* by 'Josef Martin', University of Illinois Press 1988

² Tara Tuckwiller, "Alumnus protests construction: arched building over Alumni Mall sparks renewed controversy", *Collegiate Times* (VPI&SU) 96:10:11, p. A2

³ For example, *60 Minutes*, 96:10:27

⁴ Personal communication from M.S. to M.F., 96:2:22, on file

⁵ Newsletter to friends, #2, December 1995. The person concerned is, to the direct knowledge of VS's editor, a most charismatic, dedicated, and appreciated teacher and a researcher with a genuinely high reputation. His Department Head told him that he would not be promoted to full professor unless he brought in large amounts of grant money. His research field happens to be one in which large grants are not commonly available, so this was tantamount to telling him to switch research interests solely in order to bring in money

⁶ Tom Lane, cited in Scott Heller, "Educators on the Left organize to fight attacks on academe...", *Chronicle of Higher Education* 96:10:11, pp. A12-13

⁷ For example at Virginia Tech, one prize of \$20,000 and two of \$10,000 each: Liz Crumbley & Sally Harris, "Engineering fundamentals, geological sciences, mathematics named exemplary departments", *Spectrum* (VPI&SU) 19 #5 (96:9:26), pp. 1, 7; Laura Rosback, "Departments receive awards", *Collegiate Times* (VPI&SU) 96:9:27, pp. A1, 3. Yet another such scheme has been mooted, "modest additional support" for two or three successful academic programs to be identified as "Steeple of Excellence" – John Ashby, "President's announcements cover range of university subjects", *Spectrum* (VPI&SU) 19 #6, 96:10:3 p. 1

⁸ Memo to Deans, Directors, Dept. Heads, 96:1:23

⁹ Leonard Peters to Faculty, "ASPIRES program", 96:8:29; also E-mail announcement, STSFAC-L list, Virginia Tech, 96:10:2

¹⁰ See "Academic Standards", p.13, and book review p.14

¹¹ Jack Bogaczyk, "Va. Tech gets down and dirty", *Roanoke Times* 96:9:6, p. B1

¹² Murray Sperber, *The Athletic Department vs. the University*, Henry Holt, 1990

¹³ Richard G. Sheehan, *Keeping Score: The Economics of Big-Time Sports*, South Bend (IN): Diamond Communications, 1996

¹⁴ For example, Peggy S. Meszaros to Virginia Tech Faculty, "Incentive program announcement", 96:3:8, announcing \$200,000 available; Greg Edwards, "Hotel Roanoke a posh classroom", *Roanoke Times* 96:10:4, p.A9; Liz Crumbley, "Two COTA fellows named", *Spectrum* (VPI&SU) 19 #6 (96:10:13) pp. 1, 4

¹⁵ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 96:3:7, p. A16

¹⁶ "Promoting teaching", letters from Stan Metzberg and Howard M. Lenhoff, *Science* 273 (96:8:9); "Science teaching: how to spend \$5 million", letter from David B. Seligman, *Science* 274 (96:10:18) 326

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It gives me great pleasure to greet readers of *Virginia Scholar* – wearing my new hat as President of VAS. Few members attended the annual meeting in Richmond in October, and I hope to have the chance to meet many, if not most, of you during the coming year. Let me say, first, that I intend to write a regular column in *VS*, which will hopefully establish a line of constant communications with our more than 200 members. For in my view the Virginia Association of Scholars is what its members make of it. Although I have several projects in mind for the Association (more on that in the next issue of *VS*), I am also extremely open to your suggestions for future VAS activities. I'm also of the view that these activities should be decentralized geographically, so my location in the northern reaches of our Commonwealth should not worry those of you located further down-state.

Most readers of this newsletter are members of both the Virginia and the National Association of Scholars. In that capacity we receive *Academic Questions*, the current [Fall 1996] issue of which contains "Deliberations" on the relevance of race to

educational policy. I strongly subscribe to the claim made by *AQ*'s editors, that racial division remains the most pressing American dilemma. Its effects on education are surely not limited to California, whose electorate has courageously proscribed state race-discrimination in higher education. Here in Virginia, for example, a binding decision by the Federal Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit outlaws race-based scholarships in state institutions. Yet rumors persist that this ruling has been ignored by several Commonwealth colleges and universities.

I encourage any of you who know of instances of race-based scholarships to contact VAS. I also encourage all members and prospective members of our association to contribute, in these pages, to this debate. Should race play any role at all (it undoubtedly does play a significant role currently) in admissions to our various schools? How, if at all, should educational institutions address disparities in the educational performance of various demographic groups? I look forward to hearing from many of you on this subject.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING & BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The formal business meetings of VAS and its Board of Directors were held at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond on October 5, 1996.

In his President's report, Ted Smith praised recent developments favorable to VAS members, including the formation of a new accrediting agency and of new learned societies in the disciplines of English and History. He noted positive jurisprudential developments, including the Fourth Judicial Circuit's ruling against race-based scholarships in universities. He explained that the failure to convene a meeting in 1995 had been due to scheduling problems with the Commonwealth Secretary of Education, who had originally agreed to serve as guest speaker. He noted that VASNET is now operational, and that our newsletter continues to serve us brilliantly. He bemoaned the relative lack of success of regional chapters, and the lack of original research by the Association. Finally, he noted that the Annual Membership Meeting of the National Association of Scholars is scheduled for December 7, 1996 in Princeton, NJ.

Allan Mandelstamm delivered the Treasurer's report. It shows a current balance of approximately \$2450.

Possible activities discussed included preparation of a brochure, a membership drive through activities across the Commonwealth, and high-profile press releases by VAS officers. We have not yet secured campus representatives across the Commonwealth.

A resolution was unanimously adopted praising the important contributions of our late colleague Whittle Johnston of the University of Virginia. Dr. Robert Lerner of the Maryland Association of Scholars, an esteemed guest at the meeting, informed the attendees that the NAS has commissioned him to study core-curriculum requirements in Maryland and Virginia universities. Attendees pledged their support for this study. This prompted a discussion of the merit of the Association's engaging in state-wide research, which would certainly be helped by identifying contact persons at each college and university campus across the state. Ted Smith reported on the satisfactory conclusion to the Smith vs. VCU case, in which he and other professors had contested discriminatory practices following studies of so-called "gender equity". Ted also noted troubling issues surrounding university claims of ownership of e-mail messages and personal computer files.

Directors were elected to fill vacancies and to replace retiring Directors. At the meeting of the Board of Directors that followed, officers were elected – for a full roster, see p. 23.

A resolution of thanks to outgoing president Ted Smith, for all his efforts in support of VAS, was carried unanimously.

(abstracted from Draft Minutes prepared by Michael Krauss, secretary pro tem)

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DIS-EASE

— Testing Negative for Common Sense

by *Theophilus Whiteman**“Sir, I may not agree with your opinion, but I’ll defend to the death your right to voice it”**“Well, you’re entitled to your opinion”**“Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me”*

Remember these sayings? There was a time when they described an academic ideal, based on the belief that free speech was a treasured right. There was also a belief that an important aspect of character included the mental strength and discipline to deal with things one didn’t want to hear.

Fast-forward to today’s universities and consider the following:

- At Cornell University a professor teaching a course in constitutional law discusses a 1987 Supreme Court case refusing to strike down Georgia’s sodomy law. In response to a question, he attempts to explain why Georgia voters may support such laws even though they are never enforced. A student contacts a university “sexual harassment counselor” who notifies the professor that he had created a “hostile work environment” and was guilty of sexual harassment.
- A University of Michigan student writes a paper on American politics and includes as a fictitious stereotype a chauvinist male named “Dave Stud”. A female teaching assistant threatens sanctions, alleging that the name is contrary to the department’s “Checklist for Nonsexist Writing”.
- A Penn State University English instructor claims she is sexually harassed by the presence of Goya’s famous painting “Naked Maja” in a university lecture-hall. “Any picture of a nude female”, she says, “encourages males to make remarks about body parts”. The painting is removed though it is considered one of the great classics of Western art and has hung in the hall for over a decade.
- A female professor, known for her interest in

women’s issues, is approached by a female graduate student distraught about the end of an affair with a faculty member. The woman professor offers sympathy and notes that an official complaint of “sexual harassment” is feasible. She also notes that the affair was voluntary and suggests professional counseling. A week later administrators begin a lengthy investigation of both professors, pursuing charges of harassment and a cover-up.

The Times They Are ‘A Changing

The first rules against sexual harassment were designed to prevent supervisors, usually men, from forcing subordinates, usually women, to tolerate sexually aggressive behavior. This behavior included seeking sexual favors in return for continued employment, good job evaluations or grades. These abuses of power conflicted with the basic American value of fairness, and prohibitions against them were needed and welcome.

In recent years, however, radical feminists have succeeded in pushing for a sweeping expansion of sexual-harassment guidelines. These seek to regulate virtually all interaction between all employees, and in the case of universities, students. The new guidelines create a workplace of hidden land-mines that can blow up in anyone’s face at any time. Worse, they undermine the character of students. And the underlying reasons have little to do with sexual harassment and everything to do with gender politics.

An Example – Virginia Tech

One of the most significant changes in sexual-harassment rules is in the sheer number of situations they now cover. In rules adopted by Virginia Tech, for example, a person accused of sexual harassment is no longer required to have supervisory power over the accuser. Virginia Tech’s Policy 1025 states: “The University recognizes that sexual harassment may occur between persons of the same University status”. In other words, a student or worker who could give a peer a disapproving look or

Theophilus Whiteman is a strong supporter of VAS and has often contributed material for Virginia Scholar. Like so many of us, he was considered one of the most ‘liberal’ students at his university, has no love for politicking, doesn’t enjoy confrontation or arguments – “But the failure of the present academic establishment to support and promote the idea of open and honest discussion of PC issues, and the utter politicization of teaching and knowledge are just too gross to let pass”.

say, “Hey, I don’t appreciate that” – with no fear of reprisal – is instead encouraged to report that they’ve been sexually harassed.

But how, a normal person might ask, can you be “harassed” – to the point of needing government protection – by someone who has no power over you? The humor may be lost on the tautologically challenged, but the answer is that the new regulations basically hold that anyone or anything that makes you feel uncomfortable has power over you. Under the new guidelines, it is assumed that words (the tools of academic truth-seeking) contain a power that we are all helpless against.

If this confuses you, join the club. Even Virginia Tech’s sexual-harassment manual unwittingly illustrates the confusion. On page 8 it admonishes “Remember: sexual harassment is not about romance or an occasional compliment. Sexual harassment is an abuse of power”. Then on page 11, we read that sexual harassment may occur between persons of the same University status.

Was It Bad for You, Too?

Under the new sexual conduct rules it’s not necessary for a “harasser” – read supervisor, co-worker or fellow student – to seek sexual favors. (Indeed, Virginia Tech’s manual on page 9 provides the cheery fact that less than 15 per cent of all reported sexual harassment cases involve a *quid pro quo* for sex.) According to Virginia Tech’s manual, sexually harassing conduct now includes conduct that “has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.”

It is vital to recognize this change for what it is. It’s no longer necessary for someone to believe their job is in jeopardy in order to feel “sexually harassed”. It’s no longer necessary for them to feel they must endure lewd jokes to get a good job recommendation or a good grade. It’s only necessary that they feel that a colleague has created an “offensive work environment”.

So, you say, I’ll be careful not to offend anyone. But how do you know what’s “offensive”? One of our correspondents put this very question to his “trainer” in sexual-harassment seminars conducted by Virginia Tech in 1996. The trainer’s answer was that there was no set definition of offensive. “Nor should there be”, she added, “since this might dissuade some people from coming forward with complaints”. When our correspondent asked how he was supposed to

know what behavior to avoid, since the definition of offensive was different for everyone, his trainer mumbled that there were certain professional standards everyone understood, and anyway, all he had to do was ask everyone he interacted with what they felt was offensive. Understood?

Accidents Happen

This intentionally vague definition of “offensive” becomes especially important when you note that the new rules hold that your conduct is harassing if it has the “effect” of creating an offensive environment. When our correspondent asked his trainer if this meant offense could be given unintentionally and by accident, she responded “Yes”.

Again, it’s important to pause and note this change. No intent of offending is necessary. “Offensive” is defined in the mind of the accuser. It is an interpretation not necessarily based on the inherent meaning of words or actions. Once someone decides you’ve offended them, the burden is on you to show they are being “unreasonable”. You can stand in front of a morning class and make a comment that the class hugely appreciates, and then repeat the comment to an afternoon class and find yourself investigated for sexual harassment, even if only one student out of 300 complains.

“I Like to Watch”

But the new regulations expand the domain and power of the sexual-harassment police even further. Under the new rules, the complaint doesn’t even have to come from the party who was sexually harassed. It can be made by someone who merely witnesses something they decide is actionable. So if you are too stupid or too strong to realize that you are being sexually harassed, someone with a keener sensibility than you can report the incident anyway. Indeed, last year Virginia Tech distributed a poster stating in large letters, “Sexual Harassment – If it’s visible to you, let us know – Office of EO/AA”.

Big Sister is Watching.

Fairy Tales Can Come True:

It Can Happen to You

Most people naively assume that they could never be accused of sexual harassment. They think they recognize offensive conduct, or that a fair and just system will protect them. The unsuspecting should review the examples mentioned at the beginning of this article – would you, dear reader, have recognized them as “sexual harassment?” And consider these other examples from Cornell University:

- A professor is badgered by a mentally unbalanced student. The faculty member obtains a court order against the student, who charges sexual harassment. The professor is investigated.
- A professor is troubled by repeated sexual overtures from a student and asks the student to find another major advisor. The student charges sexual harassment. Again, the faculty member is investigated.
- A professor places on a campus bulletin-board an advertisement for a center that offers counseling which “cures” homosexuality. Students occupy the faculty member’s office, and the university begins an investigation while an assistant dean explains, “[The professor] may have a right to free speech, but the students have a right not to be offended”.

The sexual harassment police would note that no official sanctions were pursued in these cases. True, but averments that nothing serious happened to the faculty members are disingenuous as to the effect of “compliance” procedures. They reflect a negligent, or perhaps even willful, failure to explain the true import of such procedures on the university community.

Consider the actual mechanics of a sexual-harassment investigation. Virginia Tech’s *Sexual Harassment Manual* states that when a charge is brought to the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office the office “will attempt to resolve the complaint informally with the accused”. Sounds innocuous enough. But the manual also states that until a formal (written) complaint is filed, “the accused will not be informed of the name of the accuser or the name of the victim [note accuser and victim are different] unless they have consented”.

And how will the EO/AA office assess the accuracy of a charge? Interview you. Interview colleagues. Talk with students. And while it’s doing this, do you walk the halls of your department saying “I am not a sexual harasser”? Tell your students, the accuser hidden in their midst, you aren’t really a monster?

And inevitably, as in most political battles, there will be leaks. Some years ago at Virginia Tech, Dr. Allan Mandelstamm was accused by *one* student (out of 35,000 in twelve years) of making sexist remarks in class. Despite an aggressive attack by the university’s office of Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action, Mandelstamm was found innocent of the charge. Nevertheless, the Women’s Network at Tech conducted a letter-writing campaign against him in the

local newspapers. The letters, written by women who had never sat in a Mandelstamm class, frequently reduced his wife to tears.

Ask yourself: How do you retrieve your reputation once your name is connected in local papers with a charge of sexual misconduct? Do you stop friends and associates in hallways, supermarkets, and your church and tell them what they’ve heard isn’t true? Or do you just smile weakly and move on?

Training for Victimhood

One of the saddest aspects of the new sexual-harassment rules is that they reinforce victimhood. People, specifically women, are told that they should see themselves as fragile china subject to shattering by mere words or looks. By instructing people to turn to administrators to solve the pettiest of problems, the sexual harassment police substitute (intentionally?) government power for individual character.

As social critic Florence King once wrote: “Pseudo-feminists talk aggressiveness but practice timidity. Take sexual harassment. Every time I turn on the news some woman is describing, with murky insouciance, that terrible day ten years ago when her self-esteem was shattered because her male boss kept looking at her ‘body parts’ instead of her face. A real feminist would say, ‘I’m up here, Mr. Crabtree’, and that would be the end of it. If you say it right, you only have to say it once”.

What parent wouldn’t choose to give a daughter Ms. King’s backbone rather than the noodle-like spine promoted by the sexual-harassment Gestapo? And who among us respects an individual too timid to stand up for himself?

Sexual Positions

But why would anyone promote a policy that hurts women in this way? The reasons are as varied as the human soul. In the case of administrators who simply go along with the policy, it may be a matter of convenience. Why oppose something that will probably get you attacked? Look at what happened to Dr. Mandelstamm. As spouses learn over the years, there are times when saying “Yes, dear” or “Anything you say, dear” is much less trouble than provoking an argument.

Then there are the twin narcotics of job security and power. Imagine for a moment that you administer a college program. Then new rules are passed and your office is responsible for enforcing and explaining them. What if you need more staff, a better office (maybe even a “Center”), and, of course, a big-

ger budget. Suppose the elevation of your “issue” requires periodic meetings with the university’s President. Suppose you are given a seat on more university committees and the news media must come to you for information on stories? Suppose it is necessary to conduct training sessions and network with various other campus offices to run educational programs that last an entire week? Are these things bad for your career and job security?

Lastly, there are the true believers. These people sincerely believe that government should regulate all interactions between citizens that might cause someone emotional harm. They have a special mission to educate everyone else in proper behavior and to see that everyone toes the line. Their mantra is that they educate us in how to deal with “a rapidly changing and increasingly diverse environment”. Never mind that they work to change the rules of normal social interaction in a way that bewilders everyone; they will be there to explain how we should behave.

Gender Politics or Academic Values:

Who Gets to be on Top?

This last group is the driving force behind the new expansion of sexual-harassment rules. They are about politics, not academics. In interviews with news organs, they admit they sought their jobs to “change the system”. Not a bad goal in itself, but many are using the sexual-harassment rules to satisfy personal grievances and push an agenda that includes radical notions of normal behavior. Anyone violating this agenda can be attacked for sexual harassment – witness the professor who posted the information on a “cure” for homosexuality. And anyone who refuses to be cowed will receive special attention – witness Dr. Mandelstamm.

The critical question is whether these people have academic excellence or social engineering in mind.

And how does their doctrine affect academia? Few professors don’t self-censor these days. And it’s not just out of thoughtfulness or sensitivity for the feelings of others. No, now it’s out of a fear of “getting into trouble”, and that is a different motive entirely, one especially troubling in a university community. For when academics trim their words to keep from

“getting into trouble”, we are looking at a class of people who have violated the charter that gives them such privileges as tenure.

You’ve Come a Long Way, Baby:

But to What?

While it’s clear that the types of behavior covered by sexual-harassment rules have expanded enormously, it’s not clear how continued “compliance activities” will affect academia. A professoriate that tolerates the bullying of free speech and due process will have little moral authority with students. The public will feel less inclined to support higher education. And administrators will see faculty as mere employees seeking no special knowledge, pursuing no special mission. A decision to defend a faculty member will become a matter of economics. The highest priority will be to keep the tuition checks and government subsidies rolling in. If it’s necessary to sacrifice a few people to avoid nasty publicity, so be it. Why start an argument about elemental principles when even faculty won’t fight for them?

Why start an argument, indeed? Why uphold a tradition of free speech and character development? Where sex is concerned, it’s so much easier, as Samuel Johnson wrote so long ago, to “teach the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing master”.

When people are discriminated against for... race or gender, they may carry anger within themselves. A mentor who is still carrying this anger may not be the best person to help another angry individual see that some of the problems she or he is experiencing may be self-induced....

what women are doing or not doing... contributes to their continued discrimination. Women sometimes fall into what I call the victim mode, where they tend to place the blame for their career misfortunes totally on others....

setting someone up for failure, withholding information, and establishing dominance are actions that men take toward other men in the workplace, not just toward women. Indeed, men are just as likely as women to feel insecure

The future for women in the scientific and engineering community has never been brighter.

— Deborah L. Grubbe
 “Boosting women’s numbers in science”
Chemical & Engineering News 93:12:13, 49-50

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Student "Success"

We hereby lodge our claim for the \$500,000 or so that a Committee for Student Success (see p.5) is offering for projects to "enhance undergraduate-student success". We have a fool-proof, guaranteed-to-work scheme:

The registrar's computer is programmed so that, after instructors have turned in their grades, all grades are increased by the desired amount. Thus

- an immediate improvement in student retention and success;
- at virtually no cost;
- by well-tried mechanisms –
 - (1) grade inflation
 - (2) changing grades administratively without consulting instructors;
- requiring no effort on the part of students,

which all fits perfectly with the contemporary culture and practices of American schools, colleges and universities.

Society for a Return to Academic Standards

Grade inflation and declining academic standards have been with us for about three decades. Over the last ten or fifteen years, another disturbing trend has been discerned by an increasing number of faculty: a deteriorating attitude among college students that encompasses unwillingness (or inability) to study, expectations nevertheless that high grades will be recorded, and disrespect if not downright rudeness toward teachers.

The awareness is spreading

among college instructors that the increasingly unsatisfactory atmosphere in their classes is **not**, as they automatically at first assume, their individual fault; rather it reflects a cultural sea-change.

I came to realize that following exchanges of correspondence in the weekly journal for chemists and chemical engineers¹. A symposium presentation followed on "The New Generations: Students Who Don't Study"² and a great deal of subsequent correspondence, which reveals a very widespread concern among high-school and college teachers **as well as the more mature students**. Some relevant reading:

- Peter Sacks, *Generation X Goes to College*, reviewed on page 14
- J. E. Stone, "Inflated Grades, Inflated Enrollment, and Inflated Budgets: An Analysis and Call for Review at the State Level"³

¹ Walter J. Deal, "Declining exam scores", *Chemical & Engineering News*, 24 April 1995, p. 4.; Henry H. Bauer, "Students' bad attitudes", *Chemical & Engineering News*, 7 August 1995, p. 5

² Symposium on "The Technological Society at Risk", Annual Meeting, AOAC International, Orlando (FL), 10 September 1996; to be published in the *Journal of AOAC International*

³ *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 3 # 11, 26 June 1995; a peer-reviewed electronic journal operating as a LISTSERV under the name EPAA at LISTSERV@asu.edu; ISSN 1068-2341; gophered at INFO.ASU.EDU in the sub-directory Campus-Wide Information at <http://info.asu.edu/asu-cwis/epaa/welcome.html>

- The Society For a Return To Academic Standards⁴
- That student evaluations measure instructor's personalities rather than student learning is the conclusion of a number of studies abstracted by John Damron⁵ of Douglas College in British Columbia
- Students' wish to be entertained rather than educated, as revealed in evaluations of teachers, is illustrated in "What students want: a meditation on course evaluations" by Paul Trout (English, Montana State University) in *Montana Professor* 6 #3 (Fall 1996) 12-19
- How we fumble in trying to educate students who don't care to be educated, while trying to please them, is nicely described in "A Fable of Reform" about teaching college mathematics: see the February 1996 issue of the *American Mathematical Monthly*, 103 #2: 134-42, also available on-line at <http://www.utm.edu/~jschomme/cess.htm>

⁴ <http://http.tamu.edu:8000/~crumble/sfirtas.html>

⁵ John C. Damron, "Instructor Personality and the Politics of the Classroom": student ratings of instructors measure characteristics largely independent of, and in part negatively correlated with, student learning; references to many studies and meta-analyses – <ftp://ftp.csd.uwm.edu/pub/Psychology/BehaviorAnalysis/educational/> the file is "politics-o...".

BOOK REVIEW

Generation X Goes to College: An Eye-Opening Account of Teaching in Postmodern America, by Peter Sacks. Chicago & LaSalle (IL): Open Court, 1996, 208 + xiv pp., \$17.95 (p)

There has been a sea change in American higher education. As is common when a culture shifts, awareness comes slowly, gradually. Though some of the effects have long been felt by most college teachers, few have yet grasped the significance of what they experience. Peter Sacks's book will enlighten them. It should also enlighten the general public as to what college teachers are increasingly suffering.

We teachers instinctively assume that when something feels wrong about how our classes are going, it must be that we're doing something badly. That presumption is routinely reinforced by educational theorists, parents, administrators and, increasingly, by the students themselves. If too many students get failing grades, it must be the teacher's fault, who needs to make things more interesting, needs to get up-to-date with information technology, needs to become sensitive to individual learning styles. Conferences are mounted on "retention" of college students as though it were within the power of administrative and faculty action to do something about it. Students are invited to evaluate their instructors, as though it were the students rather than the teachers who are fit to judge what must be learned and how.

Sacks's book will reassure many college teachers: the changes that have recently alarmed us are not our individual fault as instructors, **for most college teachers in the land are experiencing the same thing.**

For several years before Peter Sacks published his book, I had – I realized by hindsight – been groping my way toward similar insights. I have been teaching in colleges since the late 1950s, freshman chemistry much of that time among a variety of other things. I took 1978-86 off in administration, returning to the classroom in 1986. Almost immediately I found myself frantically seeking ways of doing better, for somehow the performance of the students was declining year by year. I offered extra-

credit devices; I wrote long hand-outs about how to study; I used some videos; I placed self-help materials on reserve in the library and handed out guides for using them.

I was mildly gratified when some of my colleagues praised the hand-outs they had seen posted and asked to copy them. "Aha!", I should have said to myself but failed to, "They're having the same problems! It's **not** my fault!" But I was preoccupied with the declining student performance, which continued no matter what I did; and in that preoccupation I continued to presume that **I** should and **could** do something about it.

The rate at which students were failing crept from less than 10% to more than 20% and continued upward. That it must be my fault was reinforced by the increasingly disrespectful attitude that more and more of the students were showing. They would open newspapers in class to read them; they would have petting sessions in the back rows; if I asked them to stop talking to one another during class, they would express visible annoyance. When I told a student to wait until others had finished their exams before I answered his query about one of the answers, he hot-footed to the Department Chair to complain that I refused to answer his question.

In three decades of teaching I had never been rated as less than "good" and often significantly better (on the usual 4-point scale of 4 = excellent, 3 = good, 2 = fair, 1 = poor); but in the late 1980s my rating began to decline, finally reaching about 2.2 – in freshman chemistry; yet in undergraduate humanities classes and graduate courses, I was still rated at about 3.5.

My manner of grading, and that I used multiple-choice questions, provided an insight into student performance. For those who did better on the final exam than on quizzes during the semester, I weighted the final higher; and **vice versa**. So I was always comparing each student's performance dur-

ing the semester and on the final. From 1986-88 into the early 1990s, **the proportion of students doing better on the final dropped from 75% to 30% or so**, even though the questions on the final were of exactly the same sort, on exactly the same material, as those on the quizzes. Evidently fewer and fewer students were studying for their finals, or studying effectively.

I wrote reports on this phenomenon and distributed them to my colleagues and to administrators. The response from administrative and governance quarters was a deafening, dispiriting silence. I asked the Director of a Teaching-Excellence Center about this change in student behavior, and was answered thus: "I don't believe it". Yet more and more of my colleagues, in other departments as well as my own, were bringing me similar accounts, of students being less conscientious in their studies and more disrespectful in their general attitude.

In 1994 the weekly professional magazine for chemists (*Chemical & Engineering News*) carried a letter from a teacher in California who had quantitative data very much like mine. I wrote a follow-up letter, which brought me **scores** of letters, faxes, and e-mail from others who had, individually, experienced the same sort of thing. Still, I could arouse no interest among our administrators, our faculty-governance representatives, or our education specialists. Maybe, I could not help worrying, **all** we teachers who were experiencing these things were simply getting old and inflexible and losing touch with what it's like to be a young student; maybe it **was** our fault after all? Maybe the teachers I heard from, who were in the same boat as I, were just the small proportion who were burned out and needed to be retired?

Peter Sacks's book, as I continue to mull over it and its implications, is relieving me of those nightmares. With degrees in economics and in journalism, Sacks worked for several newspapers across the country, with sufficient distinction to get honors and awards that include a Pulitzer nomination. Attracted by the opportunity to teach, he found the actualities of the classroom grotesquely different from what he had expected – **grotesquely different from what they had been when he was a student**. His book is invaluable on (at least) two counts:

- First, as already noted, the book reassures those of us in the trenches that we are not imagining things, that we are not individually losing our marbles and lapsing into burned-out senescence.

Sacks himself "eventually would conclude that I was a good teacher, that it wasn't me who was the problem but a culture of young people who were born and bred to sit back and enjoy the spectacle... [and who] resent that I obviously couldn't measure up to standards of amusement that they learned on *Sesame Street*... *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Cosmopolitan*, Nirvana, and Pearl Jam[;]... they were conditioned by an overly nurturing, hand-holding educational system not to take responsibility for their own actions" (10).

- Second, here we have the experiences **of an outsider** to academe, not someone whose views can be dismissed forthwith as self-serving of the teaching profession – as the unwelcome observations of college and school teachers are so routinely dismissed by administrators, educational theorists and "experts", higher-education coordinating bodies, legislators, parents, and much of the hapless media.

Generation X Goes to College has two parts: One, "The Sandbox Experiment", and Two, "Education in Postmodern America". Part One "is simply a true portrayal of my experience as a teacher" (vii). "I discovered that nobody in the system had much of a stake in shoring up educational standards" (x); "that many teachers saw an increasing number of students as practically unteachable" while "being evaluated by the very students who might have a hard time getting out of bed to get to class, or trouble distinguishing a comma from a semi-colon in written English" (xi); and who "harbored a strong sense of being entitled to easy success and good grades, even though they were often unwilling to work to achieve them... [and] quick to put the entire blame for failure on the shoulders of their teachers" (xiii).

What college teacher does not recognize this description as authentic: "Scattered mostly in the back and far side rows were young males with professional sports baseball caps, often worn backwards. Completing the uniform... was usually a pair of baggy shorts, a team T-shirt, and an ample attitude. Slumped in their chairs, they stared at me with looks of disdain and boredom, as if to say, 'Who in hell cares where you worked, or what your experience is, or what you know? Say something to amuse me.' I would encounter this look and The Attitude often.... a look of utter disengagement" (9).

What college teacher could fail to guffaw upon reading that Sacks started his teaching stint assum-

ing that his students “would read the assigned books, take notes when I lectured, and show up for class.... to be adults and that I could therefore treat them as adults” (13). “Recalling the reading demands I had in college, I asked the students to read approximately one book per week” (18)...

Sacks is dismayed, as we all are, at the behavior of our students. Yet he is clear, as we all should be, that the **blame** cannot rest on the students: “we were at fault” (17), he recognized, “the good students were cheated worst of all” (61). We have all collaborated in the developing of a system that is dysfunctional, with responsibility for the developing widely diffused. Sacks emphasizes that “the book is not meant to focus criticism on any specific individual, group, or institution” (vii). Still, in my view the prime responsibility has to rest with those who are designated as **leaders**, for it is they who foster the atmosphere Sacks describes and we all know, in which “A faculty member must exert near Herculean effort to make the necessary accommodations to ensure that students are happy” (17); “faculty members were reluctant to uphold grading standards because they believed they wouldn’t be supported by administrators when push came to shove” (75); one professor “offered this scary experience: ‘The pressure I have had was not subtle. It has ranged from the administration changing my grades to the threat of a lawsuit’” (80). Sacks saw that “few of the faculty members were smiling in their private moments.... many other instructors were feeling many of the same things I was... a profound cultural upheaval that had completely changed students and the collegiate enterprise from just ten years earlier” (67). “The teachers... were going easy on students because they were afraid for their jobs. That’s how grade inflation had become institutionalized, and virtually

nobody was willing to acknowledge this” (86). The prime fault surely lies with “devotees of TQM and customer-driven education... enrollment-maximizing educational administrators” (164).

“*Maybe we can work something out*”, Sacks heard incessantly from students who had missed assignments for no good reason. That comes so naturally to those “grown up in a world in which nearly everything else was negotiable, flexible, changeable; why not grades?” (20). “I **need** an A” or a “B” or a “2.0 average”, he heard as we all do, from students presuming “that it was somehow my responsibility that they get their desired grade, or more to the point, my fault if they didn’t” (23).

Sacks quickly discovered what we are all used to in the evaluations our students make of us: the “stark dichotomy” between the seriously engaged ones and those who could care less about anything. He could be forgiven the conclusion that “I’ve got to teach the serious students” (36).

But soon he found – as we experienced ones could have told him – “that approach to be a mistake” (36): for those who would decide whether or not he kept his job were not about to rock the boat, to displease the “customers”. Colleagues advised him to “Play the game.... teach to the evaluations” (90-91); “in trying to be rigorous and demanding, I

seemed to be in a distinct minority” (50), in other words a scab who reminded his colleagues of what, they knew, they ought to be doing. His “chairman came up with the idea that I might consider taking an acting course in order to improve my class presentation skills” (51). Thus “some people in higher education are... beginning to adopt the same rhetoric as their counterparts in elementary education, that good teaching **is** tantamount to entertainment”; “the authors of one educational journal article concluded: ‘If effective teachers are entertaining

The fall 1995 survey indicates that students are increasingly disengaged from the academic experience. During their senior year in high school, students are spending less time studying or doing homework (percent reporting 6 hours or more per week dropped from 43.7 percent in 1987 to 35.0 percent in 1995), less time talking with their teachers outside of class (47.0 percent report one or more hours per week as compared with 62.0 percent in 1989), less time in student clubs or groups (29.4 percent reporting three or more hours per week, down from 34.0 percent in 1989), and less time as a guest in a teacher's home (an all-time low of 26.4 percent report occasional or frequent visits, compared with 37.3 percent in 1967). In addition, the 1995 survey shows the highest percentage ever of students reporting being frequently bored in class (33.9 percent).

Higher Education Research Institute,
National Norms for the
freshman class of 1995

teachers, and today's media-saturated students expect to be entertained and cannot tolerate boredom, then it is time to underscore the need for entertainment in the classroom" (147).

So, with conscious deliberation, Sacks devised the "Sandbox Experiment": could he attain tenure and praise from his peers and superiors by forgetting about high standards, by "pandering, usually in the form of grades, that we teachers engaged in every day out of habit or perhaps simply as a matter of professional survival" (27)?

Yes, of course he could and he did. He "taught to the evaluations" and reaped the benefit: "excellence wasn't really the point.... the real point was whether you kept students sufficiently amused and entertained" (83). But having gained tenure, Sacks chose to leave teaching again: "Post-tenure evaluation would be coming eventually, and if I wanted to remain at The College, I would have to keep my student customers satisfied" (189).

Part Two of *Generation X Goes to College* is Sacks's attempt to elucidate the causes of the cultural sea-change that is inundating us. The reasons, he sees, go beyond "Latchkey kids, divorced parents, and generation gaps" and the guilt of the parents that leads them to overindulge and fail to train their children. Another indicator is "the largest single section in the entire [nationally famous, book-]store, consisting of best-selling works on angels, UFO's, paranormal phenomena" and the like while the Science section is by comparison tiny: "the apparent revolt against reason and thoughtfulness... the overwhelming dominance of America's amusement culture, weren't limited to the habits of twenty-year-olds" (108).

"Born between 1965 and 1980... GenXers have grown up in a world in which 'truth' and 'reality' are what Coke or Connie Chung or the American Medical Association might have invented.... an image created on a video screen...." Where the slogan of the 1960s was, "Question Authority", that of the Post-moderns is, "Question Reality" (124). As one 28-year-old told Sacks, "Generation X is not a thing; it's the lack of a thing, the lack of a positive theory, or an opinion about anything.... everything is up for grabs" (139). So naturally, Sacks's "judgment of the quality of their work was simply 'my opinion'" (126).

Among the resources available to us to understand our dilemma, high on my list of recommendations is Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*

(Viking Penguin 1985, Penguin 1986). As one member of Generation X told Sacks, "If there's a unifying force of our generation, it's TV" (144).

For Generation X, the world is “a place to outwit, not a place to help run” (151). The society they grew up in has emphasized “popular entitlement to at least a middle-class existence... [as] a quasi-constitutional birthright.... Thus, for most Americans, higher education, as the main route to economic success, is considered an entitlement, not unlike Social Security or Medicare”. There’s “an expectation of immediate gratification without necessarily having to work for it; and he’s a ‘victim’ of the system if his gratification is thwarted or isn’t immediate”. Teachers pander to students with A’s just as politicians pander to voters “with promises of ever lower taxes – already among the lowest in the industrial world” (155-56).

Sacks notes how pervasively these attitudes have infused our institutions; thus the notion of the customer-consumer as king has even led to “the ‘customer-driven’ church, trying to make its ‘product’ more appealing and entertaining” (160). “The quaint notions of responsibility for one’s actions and a sense of obligation to the public good are completely laundered out of the consumption equation” (161). As David Riesman saw in 1981, “This shift from aca-

demic merit to student consumerism is one of the two greatest reversals of direction in all the history of American higher education; the other being the replacement of the classical college by the modern university a century ago”. Consider what student-as-consumer means: “how hard should a consumer have to work at buying something?” (162).

Sacks suggests what must change, given that “the former gatekeepers of knowledge and authority have become just more insignificant voices trying to be heard in the din of information and entertainment” (173). His suggestions are incontrovertible, but the rub is that they require those who have so far failed to show conviction and guts, suddenly to do so.

But no one book can do everything, nor is it reasonable to expect that anyone could see clearly how we might get of the mess we have created for ourselves. It is already a salutary service to society and to academe that Sacks has said so plainly what so many of us know but what so many of us – and chiefly our non-teaching leaders and non-teaching educational “experts” – are unwilling to acknowledge, least of all in public.

READERS' COMMENTS & RESPONSES

Some thoughtful queries from readers that call for more than cursory answer:

1. "Why are you so down on sports?"
2. "Why are athletes 'punished' for serious offenses by such trivial penalties as suspension for a single game?"
3. "Why devote so much space to books that argue against the conventional wisdom about HIV and AIDS?"

Down on Sports?

"Why are you so biased against college sports?" a reader asked me; "Were you not yourself educated under the British system? Did you not benefit from its emphasis on team sports and *mens sana in corpore sano*?"

Yes, I was; and yes, I did. I was also taught that what matters is "not that you won or lost, but how you played the game" – an aphorism usually attributed to an American sports-writer, by the way¹.

The value of sport, I was taught, was in learning self-discipline, learning to be fair, learning to respect notable human achievement no matter whether the achiever was one of your own or one of the other team's. I learned much along those lines from watching cricket, in which the sense of "fair play" and *noblesse oblige* long ago reached an admirable degree of perfection. The whole fielding team will applaud especially notable performances by batsmen of the opposing team. The batsmen show appreciation when the bowler beats them with a particularly skillful delivery of the ball. I cherish some marvelous memories of cricket in large part because of that atmosphere of thoroughgoing sportsmanship. Here's one:

I was fortunate enough to watch Don Bradman, arguably the greatest batsman of all time, together with the great Australian opening batsman Sid Barnes, as they scored a record-breaking 405 runs for the 5th wicket against England in the 1946-47 Tests. Bradman was decidedly past his physical prime, but his placing of the ball remained superb and his hunger for runs unquenched. As the hours wore on and the younger Barnes showed himself getting tired, Bradman scolded him several times for refusing quick scampers for yet another run – Barnes would have been content to wait for balls that could be hit

for 4's or 6's, which call for no running.

Bradman, as usual, scored much the faster, and though he had come in to bat later than Barnes he was out first, having scored 234.

With his new partner, Barnes continued to score, never in trouble against the bowling. But then, having himself reached 234, Barnes deliberately skied the easiest of catches to a close-by fieldsman: thereby paying a tribute to Bradman and thereby forsook a personal mark in the record books; and the cheering crowd understood and approved and gave him a standing ovation as he left the field.

Now what, by stark contrast, is there about college basketball or football in late-20th-century America that might appeal to someone raised in such a tradition of *sportsmanship* and *gallantry*?

I'm not at all "against sports", I'm against dishonesty. For instance the dishonest pretense that Intercollegiate Division I is played by *students*: the overwhelming majority of the players would never have been admitted to college were they not "athletes". Then there's the dishonesty of pretending that the "revenue" sports pay for themselves, which can be said to be so only because so much of the cost is subsidized out of general university revenues in various unpublicized ways and because there is so much continual fund-raising specifically to support the sports programs². Then there's the dishonesty of pretending that the "student-athletes" get a useful education; and the dishonesty by which coaches' remuneration is increased by such devices as emoluments for TV and radio shows that themselves must be subsidized by funds from the university. And the dishonesty of pretending that NCAA amateurism

¹ Grantland Rice, 1880-1954

² Richard G. Sheehan, *Keeping Score: The Economics of Big-Time Sports*, South Bend (IN): Diamond Communications, 1996

rules are respected; and more dishonesty still³.

I'm not "against sports": I'm against a continuing series of news items about criminal behavior and violent behavior by "students" at various universities, unfortunately including my own. I'm sick of reading, for example, that a runner is beaten up by a bunch of football players who didn't like something he said – though I know and agree that "They're not all bad", as the victim said because five other football players helped break up the fight. I'm disgusted to read that the runner's coach advised him not to press charges but to go through the Athletic Department. I'm **very** tired of reading that the Athletic Director told the victim, "I've been around long enough to know there's two sides to any story" ⁴.

As I suggested in the last issue⁵, the solution is perfectly simple: have every entering "student-athlete" sign an acknowledgment that **any** engaging in violence off the field, **no matter who starts it**, automatically means losing the athletic scholarship and being kicked permanently out of school.

What possible reason could there be **not** to do that or something like it?

The only one that occurs to me: a fear that "athletes" who could sign such a statement might not be "physical" enough to win, which in today's inter-collegiate sports seems to be all that matters. Here's an actual comparison that underscores this inference:

Groups of football players at two universities were charged last week with assaulting other students.... Officials on both of the campuses said that none of the men had yet entered plea⁶

At Rhode Island, which has no ambitions to be a national football power, "the university suspended four from the team indefinitely and dismissed two" altogether. At the other university, which seeks the "respect" accorded a national football-power, "six were suspended for a game, one for the season" (the last one had been charged with a more serious offense than assault, namely kidnapping).

Yet even with these stricter penalties at Rhode Island, soon thereafter there was a second fight in-

³ Murray Sperber, *The Athletic Department vs. the University*, Henry Holt, 1990

⁴ Rady King, "Tech reserves judgment on latest off-field fracas", *Roanoke Times* 96:9:7 p.B1

⁵ "Culture and Multi-Culturalism", *Virginia Scholar* #9 (September 1996) 2-5 (at p.5)

⁶ "Athletes on campuses charged with assault", *Chronicle of Higher Education* 96:11:15, p. A8

Virginia Scholar announces the

JOSEF MARTIN PRIZE

to be awarded periodically to honor sensible words about, or responsible conduct in, American academe (clearly we do not expect to make awards very often!).

We inaugurate the prize with an essay competition discussing:

"Colleges are said to be *represented*' by their sporting teams. How **representative** of the student body are those 'student-athletes'? In what manner can it be said that those 'student-athletes' who play football and basketball in NCAA Division IA competition are legitimately 'students' and legitimately 'represent' their respective colleges?"

Prize-winning essays are liable to be published in *Virginia Scholar*, and in addition to that distinction prize-winners will receive free subscriptions to *Virginia Scholar* for life (prize-winner's or newsletter's life, whichever is shorter).

volving football players. The coach "also barred for one game the 25 other team members suspected of participating"; and the president of the university "went a step further, forfeiting the game... against Connecticut... to 'emphasize that there are consequences to the actions we take.... there were sins both of commission and omission, by people who committed acts of violence and people who stood by and watched those acts and did nothing... Both groups of people bear responsibility'.... The game... forfeiture may have cost Connecticut \$150,000 in gate receipts and concession sales' for which Rhode Island's president "is prepared to make fair reparations" ⁷.

Now that's what I call sportsmanship and **mens sana**, putting first things first and football and game-winning into proper perspective.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

No, I'm no more "against sports" than is the editor of *American Scholar*, a life-long lover of baseball, who recently wrote about the commercialism, greed, and disgusting personal behavior that led him to announce his "retirement as a sports fan.... One of the things that made sports seem worthwhile

⁷ Thomas Wanat, "Football players' attack on a fraternity house stuns University of Rhode Island", *Chronicle of Higher Education* 96:11:1, p. A44

was the notion of sportsmanship, and this, it strikes me, is all but dead.... First, fans gave up on sportsmanship.... Athletes and, even more, their coaches have come to specialize in strategies that years ago would have been considered little more than cheating.... Much of this is owing to the huge quantity of money”⁸.

What has happened to our society, that advertisements for tickets to college football should read⁹,

Where Boys Turn
Into Men.
And The Other Guys
Go Home Crying.



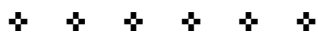
As to the education our “student-athletes” get, it apparently doesn’t inculcate many of the “critical thinking skills” that are now so much the vogue among our educational experts: “student-athletes” believe and **are encouraged to believe** that they cannot win games unless they go through such superstitious rituals¹⁰ as, “[at] our pregame meal I have to have the same people sit with me... [and the same player] has to sit next to me on my right. It’s been different ways and we’ve lost. This way... we win”.

A kicker brought his lucky holder from high school and before taking the field they “clasp hands, butt heads and salute one another”.

Another player “lays out his uniform on the floor as if he were in it before he actually puts it on”.

How do the coaches help their players put aside these childish irrationalities? Why of course they don’t, rather they reinforce them: one assistant “wears his baseball cap in the second half of the game – but not in the first, and always has to be the last person on the plane to an away game”. Offensive coordinator *— skips the number 13 during Friday’s practice when he counts down the play clock aloud”; and “no one... leaves the Saturday morning meetings until *— utters four little words... ‘It’s a big one’”.

And the Head Coach said, after his team had been beaten when wearing pants of a certain color: “No more.’ I don’t think we’ll ever wear them again”.



⁸ Aristides, “Trivial pursuits”, *American Scholar* 65 #4 (Autumn 1996) 487-94

⁹ *Roanoke Times*, for example 96:11:3, p. C8

¹⁰ Angie Watts, “Superstitious Hokies”, *Roanoke Times* 96:11:2 pp. NR1, 5

The Roman Empire, we were also taught in school, disintegrated after practical rationality was subordinated to superstitious reliance on soothsayers, when public responsibility was forgotten as the Emperors fiddled while Rome burned, when the populace was kept in short-term contentment by bread and gladiatorial circuses. Will historians of the future date the decline of American civilization to our own era in which superstition subordinated practical rationality, public duty and personal self-discipline have been forgotten, and Presidents fiddle while the public is kept in blissful short-term contentment by **cake** and gladiator-sports circuses?

Punishing Athletes

“I’m sick and tired of reading that the action taken by the Coach after [such an incident as a bunch of players beating up on a single individual] is suspending one player for one game”¹¹.

My instinctive reaction, as illustrated by what I wrote above, was to agree with this reader. But then I realized how fallacious was her and my thinking. We pictured a college student whose chief extra-curricular activity is football: no big deal, so what if he misses one game?

But recall that **the only reason why these “student”-athletes are in college is in order to “play ball”**. They have the opportunity to play a maximum of between 40 and 50 games in their 4 years of eligibility. Regular students, for comparison, have the opportunity to take about 40 3-credit courses during their college career. So suspending a player for one game is the equivalent of denying a student the opportunity to take one whole course. That’s no mean penalty.

Yet to accept that argument and recognize the punishment as adequate, one must also accept that players are not in fact students; and our Leaders are not yet prepared to acknowledge that in public. So they remain skewered on the horns of their dilemma.



I would have thought it sheer fantasy to suggest that any Division I college might voluntarily drop or down-grade its athletic ambitions. Lo and behold, something very close to that suggestion came from an influential regional newspaper¹²:

It is ridiculous that the president of the university

¹¹ Lisa K. Garcia, “Tech brawl probed; runner accuses football players”, *Roanoke Times* 96:9:6, p. B1

¹² “Does Tech need big-time football?”, *Roanoke Times* 96:11:8, p. A16

should be forced to divert his time and office on some thing so inconsequential to Tech's purpose and future as its football team.

It is ridiculous that the public image of a major, ambitious university should ride in part on something so frivolous and so remote from its mission as the performance of a university-sponsored football team... And it is downright sad that the... athletic director should... note... 'across the country you see more incidents taking place like this every year.'

It is sad, first, because... [the] point is true.... But it is sad, too, because the point comes across like an alibi...

Isn't it time to start asking serious questions about the Faustian bargain that big-time football... requires of universities?...

The university has not always had a powerhouse football team; why, and at what cost, does it need one in the future?

Who would have thought it: "so inconsequential"! "so frivolous"! "remote from its mission"!

Unfortunately, consistency of editorial stance is not an outstanding characteristic of the newspaper. Thus I prize and have often cited its editorial page of a few years ago¹³ on which one editorial, "Definitions — Taking time to smell the pork", decried the Congressional bent for awarding research funds by pork-barreling rather than via peer review; while the editorial immediately above that, "Biotech on region's horizon", congratulated the local university and congressman for getting millions of dollars to build a biotech center, the very definition of pork-barreling....

So it was no great surprise that a couple of days after asking whether the university needed big-time football, the same paper described in considerable detail the "well over \$1 million injected into the... [local] economy for a typical home-game weekend" ¹⁴.

It is just as much irrelevant to a university, just as irrelevant to its mission, indeed just as inconsequential, to boost the local economy as to have a winning big-time football program.

Indeed, both the economy-boosting and the football used to be equally understood to be side-lines, spin-offs, **secondary** or **tertiary** matters and not primary ones — beneficial by-products made all the more beneficial because they might feed further resources into the university's **primary** task which is — hold your breath — **education, learning, scholarship**.

...too much of the rhetoric is intrinsically selfish. Government holds universities to account for delivering public benefit in the narrow sense — training, employment needs, research that fuels economic growth. Students are reminded of private benefit in the narrow sense — better job prospects, higher earning capacity and networking privilege. These are all matters of consequence but remember that the true privilege gained by our students is the opportunity to contribute more effectively to our society, both spiritually and materially

Gavin Brown, Vice-Chancellor
University of Sydney (Australia)
Inaugural Lecture (September 1996)

But not any longer. Governors tell universities to hire people to work on economic-activity-enhancing projects¹⁵. Newspapers lobby to establish a local university not because it is needed by students or because there might be some special regional **scholarly** *raison d'être* but because it would supposedly boost the economy — which incidentally displays also a lack of understanding of the difference between correlation and cause-&-effect. For universities it is increasingly only the greenbacks that matter — as it is increasingly in the wider society, too.

Pray pause for an instant and ponder, where might it lead if we decided matters of educational institutions and all else primarily in terms of economic development?

Here's a great idea: Our region has excellent super-highway connections to major parts of the country. We have much undeveloped land. We have a work-force that tends to under-employment and yet is by-and-large infused with a nice old-fashioned work ethic. Are there not really big businesses that would happily locate here? How about some gambling casinos that would also bring tourists more effectively than our present feeble efforts do? How about inviting a drug cartel to make this their North-American base? What about tax incentives that would bring us the banks and money-laundering opportunities that presently are wasted, from the

¹³ *Roanoke Times* 93:8:17, p. A4

¹⁴ "Gridiron greenbacks", cover story by Mark Clothier, *New River Valley Current* pp. 1, 20-22

¹⁵ Jeff Sturgeon, "Economic mission", *Roanoke Times* 96:10:20, BUSINESS1,2

viewpoint of our own economic development, offshore? How about offering even readier and less regulated ways of registering shipping lines than are available in Liberia?

With very little effort indeed, this region could become as though touched by King Midas himself. And I have no doubt that the expertise available in our university could be enlisted to bring closer this much-desired end.

HIV and AIDS

“**W**hy [did you devote]... so much... space to AIDS literature....[?] Being made aware of this other point of view is a favor. But is current health-science orthodoxy... and proponents’ reaction to heterodoxy... an example of the PC wars?

I know... you’ve wondered why scientists quickly dismiss so many ideas.... Is this AIDS debate... another example of too-easy scientific-community dismissal of a very different idea? Is it an example of the way PC attacks non-PC ideas? And are these the same or different?”



Those questions are well worth pondering, whether or not I can construct any sort of answer. I’d like to raise a few germane points:

- In a way, perhaps the deepest or most significant, to attack “very different” scientific ideas and non-PC ideas **is** the same: in both cases, there is the attempt at thought control, to impose beliefs.
- In the case of science, “different” ideas are dismissed because they’re asserted to be **substantively** wrong – it’s science that has the right to tell us what is so and what is not so in the real world. Non-PC ideas are dismissed because they’re asserted to be **morally** wrong.
- The fallacy in the first case is the presumption that “scientific” **ideas** are always right, or at least to be preferred to other ideas. However, what’s reliable about science is not its ideas but its accumulated **empirical knowledge**. Much mischief follows from the popular misconception – rampant among scientists, philosophers and innumerable others – that scientific knowledge is somehow encapsulated in scientific **theories**. Yet it takes very little ac-

quaintance with contemporary science or with the history of science to recognize that scientific **knowledge** maintains a high level of reliability even as **theories** come and go. Indeed, scientific theories are used **even when it is known that they are not true**, just so long as they’re useful in some way – as organizers of much material, as equations for making good calculations, as stimulus for new research. Modern science happily uses wave equations and particle equations to calculate the behavior of things that **assuredly are not waves or particles**. Newtonian mechanics gives the correct answer – within the needed exactness – even though we know it not to be “true”. And so on. Scientific theories are technical devices within science just as sophisticated instruments or specialized mathematics are: fit to be used for technical purposes **but not generally fit to be exported outside their technical context**.

Untold mischief follows when society accepts the truth of scientific **theories** as a basis for social action. In the case of HIV and AIDS, that may well include iatrogenic illness and death induced by the misconceived administering of such drugs as AZT.

- The mischief in the second case, when dogmatic views of **morality** are made the basis for social action, surely needs no rehearsal. A recent example is the introduction by the Taliban in Afghanistan of what they claim to be the Koran’s teachings on the treatment of adulterers: stoning them to death while forcing their families, their young children, to watch.
- We easily relapse into forgetting the evils that ideological dogmatism brings; and I could justify much space in *Virginia Scholar* on that account. But there are other reasons too: Virginia Association of Scholars and National Association of Scholars are too often seen as dealing only with matters of PC, as just negative or reactive responses to PC, whereas they are actually an entirely positive attempt at reforms in education.



Finally, these questions I was asked give me grounds to repeat my plea for contributions to *Virginia Scholar* from other people: that’s by far the best way to ensure that *Virginia Scholar’s* editor doesn’t fill the newsletter with his own hobby horses.

THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS

believes that rational discourse is a necessary foundation of academic life and of a democratic society. So we seek to foster and protect

- the free exchange of ideas;
- academic freedom: *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*;
- the substance and integrity of scholarship and learning;
- respect for our intellectual heritage;
- rigorous standards of excellence in teaching, learning, and research;
- the evaluation of students strictly on the merit of their individual performance;

and we aim to

- create forums in which university life can be rationally discussed;
- provide informed comment on immediate and on perennial issues in higher education;

and we urge academic leaders to

- recognize learning and scholarship as the pre-eminent and primary purpose for which colleges and universities exist;
- behave responsibly in pursuit of that purpose;
- practice honesty with the public, with students and parents, with faculty, and with everyone else.

Further, we shall resist

- attempts to subsume academe under political goals;
- ideological corruption of teaching and scholarship;
- intimidation of students or faculty who voice unfashionable views;
- treatment of students, faculty, and others as ciphers or symbols of groups instead of as individuals worthy of individual consideration.

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Virginia Scholar
Editorial Office
1306 Highland Circle
Blacksburg VA 24060-5623

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