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Has there been anything really new to say about freedom of speech since Milton wrote in defense of it over 350 years ago?
This issue of *Liberal Education* features AAC&U’s new Statement on Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility, issued by the board of directors and endorsed by members at our recent annual meeting. The statement also is being sent as a separately published document to each of our member campuses.

The statement expands on the classic articulations of academic freedom, which AAC&U initially helped frame, by spelling out the relationship between academic freedom and one of the core purposes of liberal education: teaching students how to develop their own independent and evidence-based judgments about complex and contested questions.

We developed the statement with two ends in view—contributing a needed dimension to the public debate, and encouraging needed improvements in practice within the academic community.

As a contribution to the public debate, the AAC&U statement addresses many of the myths and misrepresentations about both academic freedom and educational responsibilities that have been perpetuated through the insistent external campaign to encourage political oversight of teaching and learning practices on college and university campuses. In this context, we hope it provides needed correctives to a so-called public “debate” that has been intentionally framed to distort the issues and build public opposition to scholars and their work, especially work that addresses difficult public issues. The statement spells out what is required—and what is not—under the general principle of exploring multiple perspectives on specific topics.

In particular, the statement clarifies the vital role of diverse perspectives in helping students develop their own knowledge and intellectual capacities. Political critics of the academy have presented equal representation for conservative and progressive points of view as the key to quality. But the college classroom is not a talk show. Rather, it is a dedicated setting in which students and teachers seriously engage difficult and contested questions with the goal of reaching beyond differing viewpoints to a critical evaluation of the relative claims of different positions. Within this context, diversity of perspectives is a means to an end in higher education, not an end in itself. Including diversity is a step in the larger quest for new understanding and insight. But making “balanced perspectives” the sole focus of attention threatens both to distort and to seriously undermine the larger educational aims at stake.

As a contribution to the improvement of practice, the AAC&U statement spells out some of those larger educational aims in useful detail. It articulates values and needed practices that are central to students’ learning, but that are much too rarely discussed, either with
the public, or, unfortunately, with students themselves. In this context, the statement provides an opportunity for needed dialogue—and through such dialogue, for improved practice—regarding the hard work required of both students and faculty in helping students form their own independent judgment.

Cultivating critical and analytical capacities has been foundational to liberal education for a very long time. These capacities are widely prized both within the academy and among employers; they stand at the top of almost everyone's list as core aims and outcomes of a fine education. If students leave college without these capacities, at some level, their time has been ill-spent. For these are the keys to the future—they are absolutely necessary, if not fully sufficient, to working through new problems and new challenges.

But the cultivation of critical capacities necessarily requires, in turn, far-reaching changes in the learners' own habits of mind and dispositions. The willingness to think more deeply about an issue; the willingness to hear and engage others' perspectives attentively; the anticipation that one's own views may adjust in light of new insight and understanding—all these are baseline commitments for intellectual development and maturation.

Faculty members take this as a given. The importance of scholarly community and the incompleteness of knowledge and understanding are core premises of all their scholarly work and teaching. Students, however, often arrive with a much less sophisticated concept of their intellectual goals for college. In order to make the most of their college studies, many will have to break out of a naive assumption that faculty members “deliver knowledge” to them. Yet the mutual responsibilities between faculty member and students, and between students and students—the implied compact that supports serious intellectual development—is much too rarely discussed either with students or with the public. Students often are plunged into a journey whose goals and milestones they have neither examined nor embraced.

The AAC&U Statement on Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility creates an opportunity to begin that dialogue. And by opening the dialogue, it offers as well an opportunity to improve the quality of practice. Everyone participating in the work of a liberating education needs to know clearly the kind of work that is expected, and why it matters.

We hope you will both read and use this explication of the relationship between academic freedom and students' intellectual development. We are pleased that the statement has been well received, as the responses published in these pages attest. But the real test of its value is whether you—our members—actually put it to work.

We know that some of our presidents have already shared the statement widely with faculty, staff, and students. But what we hope to hear is that it has become a point of departure for discussions between faculty and students. When the larger aims of intellectual work are better understood, it is far more likely that they will actually be achieved.

—CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER
From where David Horowitz sits crafting academic bills of rights and entering names on his blacklist of “dangerous” professors, the world must seem to revolve around him. At least that’s the impression given by his response to the Statement on Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility issued in January by AAC&U’s board of directors. “The Academic Bill of Rights does not call for ‘balance’ on faculties or in the curriculum,” he protests. “It does not impose political criteria on academic institutions” (see www.studentsforacademicfreedom.com). In the end, what’s remarkable about Horowitz’s “Statement on the AACU Statement” is not that it reveals his narcissism but that it demonstrates his disingenuousness.

The AAC&U board statement is intended for a wider audience than just Mr. Horowitz, of course, and it addresses a far broader range of issues than those raised by his Academic Bill of Rights. The academy will surely withstand David Horowitz, however wrong-headed and disruptive his campaign against it may be. Yet the tenor and substance of the current public dialogue about academic freedom do give cause for concern. As compared with the specter of the “liberal” professor, conjured up through apocryphal stories first trumpeted loudly in the media only later to be quietly discredited, McCarthyism certainly poses the greater danger to academic freedom.

In responding to this danger, the academy must help the public understand that academic freedom is a vital and necessary condition for teaching and learning in a democratic society. That’s why, in addition to providing a fuller context for the ongoing debates about intellectual diversity in undergraduate education, the AAC&U statement focuses on the educational principles at stake. It reviews the larger concepts of intellectual and personal development in the college years to show why diverse perspectives are necessary, but by no means sufficient, to fulfill the academy’s educational role and responsibilities.

The AAC&U Statement on Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility was recently the subject of wide-ranging discussion at the 2006 annual meeting of the association, where it was endorsed by the membership. Now, discussion of the statement continues in this issue of Liberal Education, as we hope it will on campuses. Here, the board statement is published alongside three responses to it. Additional responses from readers of Liberal Education are welcome (see www.aacu.org/liberaleducation).—DAVID TRITELLI
AAC&U Names Directors and Board Officers
At the 2006 annual meeting of the association, Robert Corrigan, president of San Francisco State University, was elected chair of AAC&U’s board of directors. Former Board Chair Ronald Crutcher, president of Wheaton College, will serve as the cochair of the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America’s Promise. Christopher Dahl, president of the State University of New York at Geneseo, will serve as vice chair; Elisabeth Zinser, president of Southern Oregon University, will continue in her role as past chair for one additional year.

In addition, six new board members were announced:

- Diana Akiyama, director of religious and spiritual life at Occidental College;
- Rebecca S. Chopp, president of Colgate University;
- Carol A. Cartwright, president of Kent State University;
- Leo I. Higdon Jr., president of the College of Charleston;
- Carol A. Lucey, president of Western Nevada Community College; and
- David W. Oxtoby, president of Pomona College.

A full listing of board members and officers is available at www.aacu.org/about/bddirectors.cfm.

In Memoriam: James F. Slevin
AAC&U notes with deep sadness and regret the death on March 1, 2006, of James F. Slevin, professor of English and director of the Office of Curriculum and Pedagogy in the Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching, and Service at Georgetown University. In addition to his distinguished career at Georgetown, where he taught since 1976, Professor Slevin was an active and influential member of the AAC&U community. His contributions to AAC&U—on graduate education, students’ intellectual development, and our responsibilities for social justice—were far-reaching.

Professor Slevin served as a consultant to AAC&U’s FIPSE-funded project on Preparing Graduate Students for the Responsibilities of College Teachers. This pilot project, which engaged graduate students at three major universities with faculty and students in partner liberal arts colleges, pioneered strategies that were, during the following decade, dramatically expanded through the work of AAC&U’s Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) initiative. As an evaluator and consultant, Slevin traveled to many campuses and advised PFF leaders. He was also a regular speaker at PFF national meetings.

A strong defender of both graduate and undergraduate students and their educational interests, an articulate proponent of liberal education, and a great teacher, James Slevin will be sorely missed.

Upcoming Meetings
April 20–22, 2006, Learning and Technology: Implications for Liberal Education and the Disciplines, Network for Academic Renewal Meeting, Seattle, WA

June 9–14, 2006, AAC&U Institute on General Education, Washington, DC

June 21–25, 2006, Greater Expectations Institute: Campus Leadership for Student Engagement, Inclusion, and Achievement, Snowbird, UT

July 21–23, 2006, Wye Presidents’ Seminar, Cosponsored by the Aspen Institute, Queenstown, MD

July 22–28, 2006, Wye Faculty Seminar, Cosponsored by the Aspen Institute, Queenstown, MD


November 9–11, 2006, Faculty Work in the New Academy: Emerging Challenges and Evolving Roles, Network for Academic Renewal Meeting, Chicago, IL

AAC&U Membership 2006
more than 1,000 members

- MASTERS 28%
- BACC 26%
- ASSOC 12%
- DOC 17%
- OTHER* 17%

*Specialized schools, state systems and agencies, international affiliates, and organizational affiliates
A Statement of the Board of Directors of the Association of American Colleges and Universities

Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility

On January 6, 2006, the Board of Directors of the Association of American Colleges and Universities issued the following statement, which was subsequently endorsed by member representatives at the association’s 2006 annual meeting.

Academic freedom and responsibility have long been topics for public concern and debate. Academic freedom to explore significant and controversial questions is an essential precondition to fulfill the academy’s mission of educating students and advancing knowledge. Academic responsibility requires professors to submit their knowledge and claims to rigorous and public review by peers who are experts in the subject matter under consideration; to ground their arguments in the best available evidence; and to work together to foster the education of students. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), in concert with the American Association of University Professors, helped establish the principles of academic freedom early in the twentieth century, and recently AAC&U joined with other associations to reaffirm them.*

Today new challenges to academic freedom have arisen from both the right and the left. On the right, conservative activist David Horowitz, founder of Students for Academic Freedom, has fashioned an “academic bill of rights” that is being considered in several states ostensibly as a means of protecting “conservative” students from alleged indoctrination by the purportedly “liberal” views of faculty. This bill inappropriately invites political oversight of scholarly and educational work. On the left, anti-war protests by students have interrupted speeches by proponents of current national policies. Some protestors have sought to silence—rather than debate—positions with which they do not agree. These challenges prompt AAC&U to revisit the basic principles involved and to discuss the role of academic freedom.

There is, however, an additional dimension of academic freedom that was not well developed in the original principles, and that has to do with the responsibilities

* The Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities) began work on this issue in the early 1920s. Then, through a series of joint conferences begun in 1934, representatives of the American Association of University Professors and of the Association of American Colleges established the principles set forth in the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure. In 2005, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, along with twenty-eight other higher education organizations, endorsed Academic Rights and Responsibilities, the American Council on Education’s statement on intellectual diversity on college and university campuses.
of faculty members for educational programs. Faculty are responsible for establishing goals for student learning, for designing and implementing programs of general education and specialized study that intentionally cultivate the intended learning, and for assessing students' achievement. In these matters faculty must work collaboratively with their colleagues in their departments, schools, and institutions as well as with relevant administrators. Academic freedom is necessary not just so faculty members can conduct their individual research and teach their own courses, but so they can enable students—through whole college programs of study—to acquire the learning they need to contribute to society.

As faculty carry out this mission, it is inevitable that students will encounter ideas, books, and people that challenge their preconceived ideas and beliefs. The resulting tension between the faculty's freedom to teach—individually and collectively—and the students' freedom to form independent judgments opens an additional dimension of academic freedom and educational responsibility that deserves further discussion, both with the public and with students themselves.

The clash of competing ideas is an important catalyst, not only for the expansion of knowledge but also in students' development of independent critical judgment. Recognizing this dynamic, many well-intentioned observers underline the importance of "teaching all sides of the debate" in college classrooms. Teaching the debates is important but by no means sufficient. It is also essential that faculty help students learn—through their college studies—to engage differences of opinion, evaluate evidence, and form their own grounded judgments about the relative value of competing perspectives. This too is an essential part of higher education's role both in advancing knowledge and in sustaining a society that is free, diverse, and democratic.

Intellectual diversity and the indispensable role of liberal education

In any education of quality, students encounter an abundance of intellectual diversity—new knowledge, different perspectives, competing ideas, and alternative claims of truth. This intellectual diversity is experienced by some students as exciting and challenging, while others are confused and overwhelmed by the complexity. Liberal education, the nation's signature educational tradition, helps students develop the skills of analysis and critical inquiry with particular emphasis on exploring and evaluating competing claims and different perspectives. With its emphasis on breadth of knowledge and sophisticated habits of mind, liberal education is the best and most powerful way to build students' capacities to form their own judgments about complex or controversial questions. AAC&U believes that all students need and deserve this kind of education, regardless of their academic major or intended career.

Liberal education involves more than the mind. It also involves developing students' personal qualities, including a strong sense of responsibility to self and others. Liberally
educated students are curious about new intellectual questions, open to alternative ways of viewing a situation or problem, disciplined to follow intellectual methods to conclusions, capable of accepting criticism from others, tolerant of ambiguity, and respectful of others with different views. They understand and accept the imperative of academic honesty. Personal development is a very real part of intellectual development.

Beyond fostering intellectual and personal development, a liberal education also enables students to develop meaning and commitments in their lives. In college they can explore different ways to relate to others, imagine alternative futures, decide on their intended careers, and consider their larger life’s work of contributing to the common good.

Building such intellectual and personal capacities is the right way to warn students of the inappropriateness and dangers of indoctrination, help them see through the distortions of propaganda, and enable them to assess judiciously the persuasiveness of powerful emotional appeals. Emphasizing the quality of analysis helps students see why unwelcome views need to be heard rather than silenced. By thoughtfully engaging diverse perspectives, liberal education leads to greater personal freedom through greater competence. Ensuring that college students are liberally educated is essential both to a deliberative democracy and to an economy dependent on innovation.

What is not required in the name of intellectual diversity?

There are several misconceptions about intellectual diversity and academic freedom, and we address some of them here.

1. In an educational community, freedom of speech, or the narrower concept of academic freedom, does not mean the freedom to say anything that one wants. For example, freedom of speech does not mean that one can say something that causes physical danger to others. In a learning context, one must both respect those who disagree with oneself and also maintain an atmosphere of civility. Anything less creates a hostile environment that limits intellectual diversity and, therefore, the quality of learning.

2. Students do not have a right to remain free from encountering unwelcome or "inconvenient questions," in the words of Max Weber. Students who accept the literal truth of creation narratives do not have a right to avoid the study of the science of evolution in a biology course; anti-Semites do not have a right to a history course based on the premise that the Holocaust did not happen. Students protesting their institution’s sale of clothing made in sweatshops do not have a right to interrupt the education of others. Students do have a right to hear and examine diverse opinions, but within the frameworks that knowledgeable scholars—themselves subject to rigorous standards of peer review—have determined to be reliable and accurate. That is, in considering what range of views should be introduced and considered, the academy is guided by the best knowledge available in the community of scholars.

3. All competing ideas on a subject do not deserve to be included in a course or program, or to be regarded as equally valid just because they have been asserted. For example, creationism, even in its modern guise as “intelligent design,” has no standing among experts in the life sciences because its claims cannot be tested by scientific methods. However, creationism and intelligent design might well be studied in a wide range of other disciplinary contexts such as the history of ideas or the sociology of religion.

4. While the diversity of topics introduced in a particular area of study should illustrate the existence of debate, it is not realistic to expect that undergraduate students will have the opportunity to study every dispute relevant to a course or program. The professional judgment of teachers determines the content of courses.

Academic freedom and scholarly community

A college or university is a dedicated social place where a variety of competing claims to truth can be explored and tested, free from political interference. The persons who drive the production of knowledge and the process of education are highly trained professors, and they, through an elaborate process of review by professional peers, take responsibility as a community for the quality of their scholarship, teaching, and student learning. Trustees, administrators, policy makers, and other
stakeholders also have important roles to play, but the faculty and their students stand at the center of the enterprise.

The development of a body of knowledge involves scientists or other scholars in developing their best ideas and then subjecting them to empirical tests and/or searching scholarly criticism. Knowledge is not simply a matter of making an assertion but of developing the evidence for that assertion in terms that gain acceptance among those with the necessary training and expertise to evaluate the scholarly analysis. In order to contribute to knowledge, scholars require the freedom to pursue their ideas wherever they lead, unconstrained by political, religious, or other dictums. And scholars need the informed criticism of peers who represent a broad spectrum of insight and experience in order to build a body of knowledge.

One of the great strengths of higher education in the United States is the integration of scholarly research and educational communities. Students benefit enormously when their learning is guided by thoughtful and knowledgeable scholars who come from diverse backgrounds and who are trained to high levels in a variety of disciplines.

A discipline consists of a specialized community that, through intense collective effort, has formulated reliable methods for determining whether any particular claim meets accepted criteria for truth. But assertions from any single disciplinary community as to "what is the case" are themselves necessarily partial and bounded, because other disciplinary communities can and do provide different perspectives on the same topics. Economists, for example, see poverty through one set of lenses, while political scientists and historians contribute different, and sometimes directly competing, perspectives on the same issue.

Any assertion from a particular individual or a specific intellectual community is necessarily simpler than the complexity it attempts to explain and describe. This is the central reason both scholars and students must work within a communal setting that involves multiple academic disciplines, and that fosters an ethos of communication, contestation, and civility. By creating such communities of
One of the great strengths of higher education in the United States is the integration of scholarly research and educational communities.
cannot be allowed to be content with the notion that there is no legitimate way—beyond arbitrary choice—to determine the relative value of competing claims.

Thus it is vital that liberal education be organized to help students progress to a third, more mature, mental framework in which they form judgments—even in the face of continuing disagreement—about the relative merits of different views, based on careful evaluation of assumptions, arguments, and evidence. One of the central purposes of majoring in a particular discipline or academic field is to come to the understanding that different fields of endeavor provide well-grounded intellectual criteria for making decisions about alternative claims. Using these criteria, students can learn to discriminate by arguing the evidence, with the understanding that arguments exist for the purpose of clarifying ideas, evaluating claims, considering consequences, and making choices.

In this process, it is important that students be asked to assess competing points of view and to address them in making their own arguments. A good analysis does not simply ignore competing perspectives; rather, it takes them thoughtfully and carefully into account. Students need to learn, through the kind of extended and direct experience afforded by study in depth as well as general education courses, to be able to state why a question or argument is significant and for whom; what the difference is between developing and justifying a position and merely asserting one; and how to develop and provide evidence for their own interpretations and judgments.

Accomplishing this kind of educational result cannot be taken for granted or left to students’ unaided musings. There must be curricular space, capable guides and models, and a supportive institutional culture to encourage students as they learn to develop their own critical judgments. Freedom to learn is indispensable for both students and professors as they examine and assess disparate points of view within and across disciplinary boundaries. In the best designed college curricula and assessments, ample opportunity exists for students both to work on these intellectual skills and to demonstrate to the community their level of achievement in analyzing complex questions.

Further, this kind of intellectual journey often has the greatest impact on students when they apply their knowledge and inquiry skills to issues and problems beyond the academy.
Students sometimes envision education as being removed from the “real world,” but direct involvement with communities beyond the academy can illustrate the actual power and significance of their learning. In such community settings, students may encounter new forms of intellectual diversity, forms that emerge from working with people whose histories, experiences, perspectives, and values may be decidedly different from their own—and also, perhaps, from that of the scholarly community. Service learning, community-based learning, community action research, internships, study abroad, and similar experiences all provide opportunities for authentic learning that engage students in using their critical skills to understand and to better the world.

Those outside the academy readily see the enrichment value of providing students with hands-on experience in community or organizational settings. However, they must also recognize that real-world learning may involve students with issues and problems that have been highly politicized. Indeed, some of the same experiences that enhance the knowledge, skills, and motivation of students to become more engaged in civic betterment are precisely the ones that are politically contested. As a result, faculty whose courses include community-based learning experiences often find that they must help students assess controversial topics that—at first glance—might be thought extraneous to the subject of the course. When such controversial topics emerge, faculty have to use their professional judgment in deciding whether to devote class time to them. If they do, they have a responsibility to ensure that students hear and assess diverse views on these topics.

The ideal versus the real
Academic freedom is sometimes confused with autonomy, thought and speech freed from all constraints. But academic freedom implies not just freedom from constraint but also freedom for faculty and students to work within a scholarly community to develop the intellectual and personal qualities required of citizens in a vibrant democracy and participants in a vigorous economy. Academic freedom is protected by society so that faculty and students can use that freedom to promote the larger good.

This document articulates an ideal that is based on historic conceptions of academic freedom and extends those precepts to include responsibilities for the holistic education of students. In reality, practice often falls short of these norms. Departments and sometimes whole institutions do not always establish widely shared goals for student learning, programs may drift away from original intentions, and assessments may be inadequate. Some departments fail to ensure that their curricula include the full diversity of legitimate intellectual perspectives appropriate to their disciplines. And individual faculty members sometimes express their personal views to students in ways that intimidate them. There are institutional means for dealing with these matters, and in all of these areas, there is room for improvement. The key to improvement is clarity about the larger purpose of academic freedom and about the educational responsibilities it is designed to advance.
A Response from David A. Hollinger

ACADEMIC FREEDOM is an institutionally specific type of liberty. It gains its character from the rules of evidence and reasoning used by communities of scientists and scholars to determine the relative value of truth-claims. One of finest virtues of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Statement on Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility is that it articulates this basic insight so clearly. AAC&U insists upon the responsibility of educational institutions to defend academic professionalism and to make its methods of thought available to students.

Too often, academic freedom is conflated with free speech. This closely allied ideal transcends colleges and universities, and for all its glory does not speak directly to the particular role of institutions designed for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge. Happily, the defense of academic freedom offered by AAC&U reminds its readers repeatedly that colleges and universities are obliged by the idea of academic freedom not to support the uncritical expression of any and all ideas, but to promote the critical evaluation of such ideas and to resist the pressure to treat as valid ideas discredited by the rules of evidence and reasoning.

Perhaps the AAC&U statement can help more of the public understand the structure of cognitive authority by which institutions of higher learning properly operate. This structure of cognitive authority is imperfectly understood by many of academia’s critics, yet it is the foundation for “peer review” throughout the learned world. This structure of cognitive authority can be envisaged as a series of concentric circles of accountability. In order to maintain its standing in the learned world as a whole, any particular disciplinary or subdisciplinary community must keep the communities nearest to it persuaded that it is behaving responsibly. It must also, partly by being able to point to the support of these neighboring communities, diminish whatever skepticism about its operations might arise in more distant parts of the learned world and beyond, in the society that scientists and scholars do, after all, serve.

So the structure of cognitive authority moves out from particle physics to physics to natural science to science to the learned world as a whole, and then to the most informed members of the public. The farther you get from the technical particulars of the field, the less authority you have to decide what should be going on; but, in a democratic society, there is some authority distributed all the way out. It is the job of deans and provosts to keep abreast of these transdisciplinary conversations, and to pressure particular departments and...
schools to change their way of doing things—to achieve, indeed, balance—if the parts of the learned world most qualified to judge are truly dubious about their research programs and their attendant teaching and public service activities.

This informal structure of cognitive authority has been illuminated by my late Berkeley colleague Bernard Williams in *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy,* the book he published shortly before his death. Williams reminds us that the entry fee into a learned discourse includes extensive and rigorous training, and earning of the attention of one’s professional peers through the acceptance, in argumentation, of certain forms of reasoning and certain kinds of evidence. Cranks can and must be filtered out. “The orderly management of scientific inquiry,” Williams declares, “implies that the vast majority of suggestions which an uninformed person might mistake for a contribution” will quite properly be brushed aside. “Very rarely the cranky view turns out to be right, and then the scientists who ignored it are attacked for dogmatism and prejudice,” but “they can rightly reply, there was no way of telling in advance that this particular cranky idea was to be taken seriously,” and that if every such idea were allowed to command the attention of investigators very little progress in inquiry could be made. In a conclusion that might apply to a great range of the controversies between academics and their nonacademic critics over whether this or that academic enterprise is balanced, Williams generalizes as follows: “People cannot come in from outside, speak when they feel like it, make endless, irrelevant, or insulting interventions, and so on; they cannot invoke a right to do so, and no one thinks that things would go better in the direction of truth if they could” (2002, 217).

Finally, I want to observe that the emphases in the AAC&U statement are fully consistent with those favored by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). I want to call attention to a highly salient theoretical treatise recently written by Robert Post (2006), a member of the AAUP Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure. This essay, “The Structure of Academic Freedom,” provides additional, well-argued support for the position wisely taken by AAC&U.

**A Response from Anne D. Neal**

Nearly twenty years ago, Yale University president Benno Schmidt (1991) observed that “the most serious problems of freedom of expression in our society today exist on our campuses.” It has taken a long time for the higher education community to face this fact. It is easy to perceive, and even to exaggerate, threats from the outside. It is much easier to minimize, and even to deny, threats from within.

The statement organized by the American Council on Education and endorsed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) on June 23, 2005, is a step, albeit ambiguous, in the direction of facing facts. The AAC&U Statement on Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility goes even further in that direction and may, in fact, lay the groundwork for what is really needed—action to correct the situation.

The problem consists of several elements, alluded to but not explored or acknowledged by the AAC&U statement. The first is the documented one-sided character of top university faculties in the “value-bearing” disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. The second is the widespread influence of the postmodern view that debunks the traditional premises for academic freedom and liberal education based on the search for truth and reasoned debate. The third is the power on campus of those who believe in the suppression of “politically incorrect” thought and speech. These are widespread, well-known phenomena—documented not only by their critics but often acknowledged and even advocated in print by their proponents.

Added to this is substantial evidence of a politicized classroom. In late 2004, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni commissioned the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut to conduct a scientific survey of undergraduates in the top fifty national research and liberal arts colleges and universities listed by *US News & World Report.* What did we find? A shocking 49 percent of the students said their professors frequently injected political comments into their courses, even if they had nothing to do with the subject—in direct violation of the 1940 American Association of University Professors Statement on Academic Freedom, the acknowledged touchstone of academic rights and responsibilities.
Imagine if 49 percent of professors spent class
time advocating their own religion. What if
49 percent of women said that their professors
injected sexually suggestive remarks in class?
Or African American students reported racial
insults in the classroom? Higher education
would take immediate action. Political harass-
ment and viewpoint discrimination merit a
similar response.

To its credit, the AAC&U statement reaffirms
the classic expressions of academic free-
dom and the fundamental First Amendment
principle that “unwelcome views need to be
heard rather than silenced.” It articulates an
understanding of liberal education and academ-
ic freedom based on reasoned debate and
the search for truth “unconstrained by politi-
cal, religious, or other dictums.” It emphasizes
the responsibilities, and not just the rights, of
professors. It strongly endorses “students’ free-
dom to form independent judgments”—which
is quite different from those who would mould
students into “change agents” for a prescribed
social agenda. It celebrates the diversity of
views and explains why “the clash of compet-
ing ideas is an important catalyst . . . in stu-
dents’ development of independent critical
judgment.” It underscores the importance of
grading on “merit . . . uninfluenced by the
personal views of professors.”

In its own muted way, the statement ac-
knowledges that higher education falls short
of these ideals. “In reality, practice often”—
often!—“falls short of these norms.” It gives
specifics: “Some departments fail to ensure that
their curricula include the full diversity of
legitimate intellectual perspectives appropri-
ate to their disciplines. And individual faculty
members sometimes express their personal views
to students in ways that intimidate them.” It
concludes with what may well be a (very faint)
call for action: “There are institutional means
for dealing with these matters, and in all of
these areas, there is room for improvement.”

All this is positive, and we hope that it will
lead to action. After Harvard president
Lawrence Summers made the impolitic obser-
vation that researchers might explore whether
biological factors affect the propensity of women to go into
math and science, it took only a
matter of weeks for Harvard to
appoint a diversity dean and to
appropriate millions of dollars to-
ward women and science. Why
not do the same when it comes to
intellectual diversity?

Our report Intellectual Diversity: Time for
Action (available online at www.goacta.org)
suggests a wide range of positive steps the
higher education community might take—
such as conducting a self-study on the current
state of intellectual diversity on campus; in-
corporating intellectual diversity into institu-
tional statements; and encouraging balanced
panels and speaker series. We hope that, a
year from now, colleges and universities will
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A Response from Bruce Robbins

I admire both the spirit and the letter of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Statement on Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility. The main thing I'd like to add is a reflection on the rhetorical situation that calls forth such statements. I wonder whether the struggle for the defense of the university doesn't demand other sorts of strategy as well.

In the face of persistent attacks from without, attacks that make up in financial resources and political connections for whatever they may lack in reliable information—the example that comes to mind at my university is the David Project's baseless but skillfully publicized assault on faculty critics of Israel—academics and administrators who themselves hold diverse political views have banded together, faithfully if not always swiftly, to reaffirm the concept of academic freedom. This line of self-defense has the advantage of inspiring a certain respect among the educated public. In practice, however, it has not always stood up well to waves of patriotic hysteria like McCarthyism. And it has several disadvantages that it's just as well to be clear about.

One disadvantage concerns the frequent confusion between academic freedom and freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is a universal right, available to non-academics as well. Academic freedom is not: it gives academics a great deal of authority to control speech within their domain without interference from outside it. In clarifying this confusion while also asking the general public to support academic freedom, the AAC&U statement is asking the general public to support a right, an authority, for which many will have no real equivalent in their own working lives. Supporters of academic freedom do not always seem to realize how forbidding a rhetorical and political challenge this represents.

In the effort to explain the benefits of academic freedom not to ourselves, but to the rest of society, the best we seem to have come up with thus far is the teaching of “independent critical judgment.” Like the administrative abstraction “excellence,” this has an innocent minimalism that bears looking into.

To help students think critically about a subject or problem, faculty members need to take seriously what students already know or believe about the topic and engage that prior understanding so that new learning modifies the old—complicating, correcting, and expanding it. The process of cultivating a liberal education is a journey that transforms the minds and hearts, and frequently the starting assumptions, of those involved.

Or does the statement suggest that these “starting assumptions” are not “frequently” but always wrong? The underlying belief here is betrayed in the metaphor that follows: “Just as a crustacean breaks its confining shell in order to grow, so students may have to jettison narrow concepts as they expand their knowledge.” The crustacean's shell has to be destroyed. Thus the implication is not that the “initial concepts” or student beliefs may have to be jettisoned, but that they must be jettisoned. Here academic knowledge is quietly claiming a lot for itself. I admit I myself am energized by being told that I do nothing less heroic than this. But I'm not sure it will work as well on outsiders.

I like the (Hegelian) story according to which students start by seeing things in black and white, then react to the onslaught of academic knowledge by fleeing to the opposite position that any idea is as good as any other, and then if all goes well end up realizing that, now that they can evaluate arguments and evidence, some views are really better than others. But if we academics continue to be quite so neutral as to what these better (stage 3) views are, non-academics are likely to continue to think that what we're really teaching is (stage 2) that any idea is as good as any other.

“It is inevitable,” the statement says, “that students will encounter ideas, books, and people that challenge their preconceived ideas and beliefs.” This is true to my experience, and in the present context it needs to be said and said again. But how much further down this road do we want to go? Are we ready to define the knowledge we produce as a challenge to all “preconceived ideas and beliefs”? Is our self-appointed task to supersede any ideas and beliefs that have already been conceived, and simply because of their prior conception, the fact that they exist? The risk is a seeming worship of intellectual novelty for its own sake, at the
expense of any principles (for example, principles of democracy) that would help us flesh out the goals of our scholarship and make them visible as goals an outsider too can appreciate.

Outsiders are perhaps a bit undervalued in the statement. “A discipline,” it says, “consists of a specialized community that, through intense collective effort, has formulated reliable methods for determining whether any particular claim meets accepted criteria for truth. But assertions from any single disciplinary community as to ‘what is the case’ are themselves necessarily partial and bounded because other disciplinary communities can and do provide other perspectives.” This final “because” ought to be replaced by something like “if for no other reason than the fact that.” The statement’s phrasing makes it sound as if, were it not for the existence of other disciplines, each discipline would be completely reliable. It’s as if each discipline had to agree with itself, to be unanimous in its judgment, in order to support professional opinion against non-professional opinion, so that dissent could only come from other disciplines. This misstates the way disciplines work as zones of disagreement—controlled disagreement, disagreement within limits that insiders can sense if not necessarily point to or describe.

Conflict is arguably at the discipline’s very heart, and yet it is always reaching outside the discipline. However inconvenient interference may sometimes seem, the “outside” is intrinsic to academic work. For example, it would be unfair to psychology to imagine that psychologists themselves have nothing to say to a layman’s concern about how far certain issues should and should not be medicalized, to what extent a certain sort of conduct is properly seen as a “disease” rather than (like most conduct) an inscrutable mixture of nature and nurture, free will and social determination. A healthy discipline (so to speak) is always addressing at least some of the objections that might be raised by those outside the discipline. I’m sure there are economists who are asking, when they model a given corporate strategy, how the costs to the environment and the costs to future generations might be factored in as real economic costs rather than being left to the environmentalists. Disciplines could not function without respect for the views of “outsiders,” whether from other disciplines or not.

“Academic freedom” means circling the wagons. In the larger struggle over the university to which the recent attacks belong, we may need to be more enterprising, even to go on the offensive. This will entail recognizing, threatening as the recognition may be in terms of self-defense, that the line between the academy’s inside and outside has never been as tight and defensible as we sometimes pretend.

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POLITICAL PRESSURE on colleges and universities has been a matter of common debate and concern since 1934. That was the year the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges (the precursor of AAC&U) established a series of conferences in order to reaffirm and develop the 1925 Conference Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure. These conferences produced the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure that is still the reference point for many college and university policies today. It underwent another set of revisions in 1970, when interpretative statements were added; the statement has the endorsement of approximately two hundred learned societies and organizations, including the American Council of Learned Societies, the Modern Languages Association, the American Sociological Association, the American Academy of Religion, the associations of most foreign language teachers, and many law school societies.

The AAUP conceived of the tenure system in the context of a fundamental research mission within universities: a greater emphasis on research went hand in hand with greater protections and freedom of inquiry for faculty members. The principles set forth in the statement produced practices in the university that include protection for the political viewpoints of faculty as citizens, for the appropriate use of controversial materials in teaching, and for the rights of faculty to due process. Essentially, the AAUP could foresee a large, complex research community in which controversial, indeed potentially radical, books were going to be written about history, the clash of cultures, class economics and wealth, political power, ideology, and religion. And we can see abundant evidence of this research in the vast quantity of scholarship that has changed our understanding of the historical struggle for democracy, in gender studies, in the relationship of the religions in the Middle East, Northern Europe, India, and China, and more recently in interpretations of civil rights by the U.S. Supreme Court. Even in 1940, no one could have anticipated the history that would be written in the aftermath of Nazism and Stalinism.

We now seem to be in the midst of squandering this tremendous legacy and achievement in dubious controversies, endless litigation, impractical speech codes, and various forms of mischief and harassment perpetrated upon faculty and universities by opponents of “political correctness.” Political research and analysis have morphed into culture wars and court battles over academic freedom in relation to obscenity, or into episodes of racial or ethnic conflict on college and university campuses.

The overall trajectory for university research and academic freedom is still upwards, in my opinion. I continue to be amazed at the quality and quantity of scholarship on the political problems of our time: be it books about colonialism and the slave trade, the complex philosophical origins of liberalism and republicanism and federalism, multicultural citizenship, the legal and constitutional legacy of the Enlightenment, the story of nineteenth-century voting reforms, or the role of the arts and

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literature in furthering democracy in Latin America and the Middle East. Beneath this great canopy of scholarship, there is a lot of sensationalism and hyperbole, a myriad of tempests in teapots. Why the disconnect between the products of academic freedom and the sublunary world of university administration, where a provocative remark inside class, an unruly lecturer, or a single racial epithet can unleash forces that can take a university into years of litigation?

**Politics**

My own experience as a student, faculty member, and administrator has included constant exposure to political pressure. The vast majority of that experience has demonstrated the resilience and strength of the academic system. Examples of political pressure include students complaining about a lecturer using a map of the Middle East that does not include the state of Israel; an attack by the National Rifle Association on the scholarship of my former colleague at Emory, Michael Bellesiles; a difficult tenure case involving a faculty member whose scholarship examined the formulaic style of pornographic materials; an African American student charging a Caribbean faculty member with racism; and a colleague at Rice whose work on the sexuality of the Hindu god Kali led to a series of virulent attacks in the Calcutta media and calls for his dismissal. In all these cases, action for or against the faculty member followed academic protocols and maintained academic integrity. Politics did not overrun academic freedom. I can point to only one experience where a political crisis overran the university. In 1970, during my first semester as a college student, the Canadian government unleashed the War Measures Act in response to a terrorist attack in Montreal and actually arrested lecturers and graduate students at McGill University who had any known sympathies with radical separatist groups.

By and large, such extreme action is rare in North America. Faculty are not subject to the kinds of political risks that threaten faculty in South America, Africa, and Asia, which are documented by organizations like Scholars at Risk (SAR). To give just two recent examples from the more than 450 cases documented by SAR over the last four years: Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a sociology professor at the University of Cairo, was imprisoned for five hundred days for making a film about Egyptian election irregularities; Alexander Naty, an anthropologist at the University of Asmara, Eritrea, returned from an overseas conference on religion to face detention and dismissal from his university. (For a more extended sampling of the true political dangers faced by scholars and researchers in many universities outside the United States, see Quinn 2004.)

I am personally humbled by my ignorance of all the European writers and artists who have suffered persecution during the period Milan Kundera (1996) calls the “seventy years of trial regime” in the Soviet bloc: Bunin, Meyerhold, Halas, Broch, and Vancura. How can we equate the imprisonment, exile, or persecution of these writers with the farcical battle over the supposedly racist epithet “water buffalo” at the University of Pennsylvania, which ultimately brought down the president, Sheldon Hackney, and spawned the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE)? FIRE’s growing strength could be seen in its 2000 attack upon my own university’s president, David Leebron, for admonishing a law professor at Columbia about an exam question based on the hypothetical case of a fetus killer from an anti-fertility cult. In this hypothetical case, one of the attacker’s victims, who had been unsuccessfully seeking an abortion, actually writes a thank you note to this attacker when she loses her fetus. When then-Dean Leebron wrote to Professor Fletcher about the possibility of creating a hostile environment for the female students in his class, he received a lengthy lecture from FIRE on academic freedom, civil rights, the harsh reality that law students must face as well as FIRE’s mission to protect liberty, free speech, and freedom of conscience on American campuses.

Our universities operate in a political context rich in legal protections, due process, and basic norms about academic freedom that has contributed substantially to the social good of equality, diversity, and tolerance. Ironically, references to free speech and freedom of conscience as the source of academic freedom are part of the diminishing freedom on U.S. campuses today.

Constitutionally, there is no definition of academic freedom, although the Supreme Court and many state courts have taken on cases involving academic freedom under the
protections offered by the First Amendment. Universities are now struggling with the legacy of court interpretations of academic freedom in this rather special context of the First Amendment, a context very different from the norms of research and teaching that support the AAUP principles of academic freedom. Because of the conflation of academic freedom and First Amendment freedoms, and because of the escalation of controversy into litigation, university administrators deal less and less with actual political problems and rather more with politicized speech and risk management.

The content of political speech tends to diminish into epithets, slurs, unintentional insults, and gratuitous controversy even as scholarship about the sources of racism, equality, rights, and national sovereignty grows more and more complex. Since universities inevitably generate controversy, disagreement, and critical analysis, what really needs to be protected is robust, complex political discourse. As J. Peter Byrne puts it in his wonderful essay on the courts’ takeover of academic freedom issues (2004, 99), some of the most decisive cases of academic freedom have involved “low-level writing classes in two-year institutions,” not the stuff of Scholars at Risk. What is going on here? And what can academic administrators do about it?

Speech

Ever since the landmark case of Sweezy v. New Hampshire in 1957, the courts have tested the application of the First Amendment and the Civil Rights Act to a wide variety of conflicts between governments and the universities, administrators and faculty, faculty and students, and between student groups on campus. Looking back over many years of litigation, it is remarkable to see the devolution from the truly political protection of a professor in a state school who faced dismissal because he taught Marxism in the 1950s, to courts trying to determine if they need to offer constitutional protection to professors who use vibrator jokes to teach writing, foul language to encourage class discussion, or who teach racist science or creationism. By now, the courts have established a pattern of intrusion into academic affairs. Yet their ability to offer protections and remedies is limited to procedural rights, reinstatement of contracts, or finding cause for discrimination by gender, age, or race.

When it comes to the true substance of politics, Byrne sums it up beautifully in one sentence: “the First Amendment has no concern for intellectual quality” (2004, 112). Intellectual quality is, first and foremost, the concern of speech that can properly be called academic research or university-level teaching. Politics in the university, or political pressure by special interest groups upon the university, frequently entails legalistic reasoning about low-grade political content. Byrne’s larger argument aims to rebalance the relationship between the courts and the universities. Sweezy was a good moment for academic freedom because, in that case, the Supreme Court, through the opinions of Justices Warren and Frankfurter, offered to protect the rights of the university when it comes to judging academic content and quality. The state has no business

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**2006 AAC&U ANNUAL MEETING**

**PODCAST**

**Legislative Attacks on Academic Freedom: The Latest Threats and Ways to Counter Them**

Many state and federal legislators today have a strong interest in creating mandates for curriculum, faculty hiring, and other traditional academic prerogatives. How do initiatives such as the Academic Bill of Rights square with constitutional free-speech principles? What is happening in state legislatures? In this discussion of current legislative threats, two higher education law experts provide historical context and address developments in state legislatures around the country.

**About the speakers**

**ANN FRANKE,** an attorney, is president of Wise Results, a consulting firm that advises colleges on legal issues and risk management. **LAWRENCE WHITE,** also an attorney, is president of Lawrence White Consulting.

To listen to this and other podcasts from the 2006 annual meeting, visit www.aacu.org/podcast.
telling universities what they can and cannot teach. Byrne believes that there are solid legal grounds, dating back to nineteenth-century common law doctrines, for the courts to protect academic freedom as an institutional right, as a right that belongs to the institution as a whole. Thus, universities are in a position to develop academic protocols and standards for evaluating the intellectual quality of faculty and student speech. Under the AAUP principles of academic freedom, that is a primary mission of the university.

The problems begin with so-called “political correctness” pressures on the universities and university efforts to establish special speech codes, because faculty and student speech has become the point of focus for most litigation in the last twenty years. The courts’ rejection of any policing of campus speech, in the name of the First Amendment, interferes with the educational goals of academic speech, based as they are on serious intellectual content and reflection. Byrne writes that the legal conflicts over speech codes “displace academic norms by the civic norms of the First Amendment . . . they utterly fail to acknowledge that the college or university stands in a different relation to the speech of its students than the government does to the speech of citizens generally” (2004, 101). He summarizes his position on law and the university in this way:

As a lawyer with little claim to philosophical sophistication, I am impressed by the difference between speech in the college and university context and in society at large. Speakers in academia are expected to speak carefully after study and reflection in a manner that invites response from others who similarly care about the topic. (2004, 137)

Careful, reflective speech—the product of academic freedom—is what needs to be protected.

By labeling academic and civic speech as equally free, by applying First Amendment protection directly to all utterances inside the university, we end up not with academic freedom but with FIRE. Political discourse and research, which emanate from our best scholarly works, are being displaced by debates about individual rights to utter insults, slogans, epithets, and slurs on university campuses.

The role of administrators

The general counsel’s office is a good place to go for advice about contracts, intellectual property, disability issues, sexual harassment, personal security, and discrimination. It is a bad place to go to defend or promote political values that touch deeper layers of social conflict. These values can only be defended or promoted by the use of robust, complex, truly academic vocabularies; but it is not the business of the courts to assess those sorts of academic vocabularies. Legal theorists are among the first ones to tell us that—not just Byrne but Ronald Dworkin and Mari Matsuda, legal faculty with a real stake in protecting academic freedom.

Dworkin (1996) has laid out some very practical advice for university administrators in an essay on academic freedom. He writes, academic freedom insulates scholars from the administrators of their universities: university officials can appoint faculty, allocate budgets to departments, and in that way decide, within limits, what curriculum will be offered. But they cannot dictate how those who have been appointed will teach. (246)

Academic freedom does not entitle any subject to be taught; administrators have the responsibility to decide which subject areas are important to fill. Universities, in fact, offer greater freedom and protection to the people they choose to hire than is generally the case with so-called free speech, because universities value people who may end up saying uncomfortable or difficult things and are willing to provide them with a serious audience of capable learners. But people are not entitled to work in a university, or to gain tenure in a university, just by being controversial. Their work must be important, useful, and promising.
If I follow Dworkin’s subtle reasoning, our job as administrators is not to block potentially controversial speech but to entitle people to speak who are likely to say things that are important and useful. Courts cannot consider the value of speech in this way. Administrative decisions work well when they promote speakers who are capable of saying useful and important things—for example, the kinds of things I described earlier as the canopy of political research produced by scholars—as opposed to insults and demeaning comments that end up as causes for litigation. If administrators are willing to take a stand on the values of importance and usefulness, difficult as they may be to define and maintain, we have a better chance of supporting faculty when and where it really counts.

But what about the problem of insults and demeaning speech, the fighting words that have been the center of so much pseudo politics within universities? They are a fact of life, and the harm they create cannot be ignored by university administrators. Mari Matsuda, like Byrne, locates our problems with the management of harmful, racist speech in the “unique” First Amendment jurisprudence of the United States. Various forms of hate speech are protected in this country in ways that are unimaginable in other Western democracies that belong to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The United States is, Matsuda points out (1993, 30–31), “alone among the major common law jurisdictions in its complete tolerance of [racist hate] speech”—meaning, in its belief that First Amendment protections are paramount, even when it comes to the protection of offensive speech.

Matsuda’s interest in the topic of hate speech covers large philosophical questions about the use of law in response to acts of hatred, incitement to violence, and persecution. These questions go far beyond the scope of this essay on academic freedom and what I would call true political discourse by members of a university community. Her aim is to circumvent First Amendment jurisprudence in order to find “a range of legal interventions, including the use of tort law and criminal law principles” as means of combating racist hate propaganda (1993, 38). The university is among the special cases that she explores for ways and means to combat racism and hate.

Far from allowing the spread of racism on campus, caving into First Amendment doctrine, Matsuda hypothesizes that universities may be able to use the “law of defamation” to combat hate speech. Students have a relatively weak status within the university and are undergoing great personal changes during their college years. Moreover, there are few places to retreat from racism if one lives on or near a university campus and must associate with peers in order to take full advantage of university life. The weak status of the target, under the law of defamation, may give universities the ability to limit the freedom of verbal attackers. Would this work in a court of law? I cannot say. Matsuda, like Byrne, wants to balance the most insightful, progressive contributions of higher education with the narrowly relevant applications of the law to university conflict.

I have argued that American universities continue to offer exceptional protection for scholars, that the tradition of academic freedom has produced a wealth of political scholarship and analysis, and that, following Byrne and Matsuda, constitutionally protected speech cannot be directly equated with academic speech. My message is optimistic. If we can look past some of the legal entanglements of the last decade, universities may again become the place where we discover the political insight produced by a Hannah Arendt, or a John Rawls, or a Judith Shklar, or a Charles Taylor.

To respond to this article, e-mail liberaled@aacu.org, with the author’s name on the subject line.

REFERENCES


A LIBERAL EDUCATION depends upon—presupposes—unfettered thought, inquiry, and expression. This is necessary not only for the production of knowledge but also for the preparation of citizens in a diverse democracy. A vital campus is one where ideas meet, mix, conflict, engage, and emerge changed by the interaction. But genuine dialogue is a difficult, even fragile, human endeavor. It entails both speaking and listening, articulating one’s views and earnestly considering those of others. Campus communities need both to protect the rights of all members to think and speak freely and to foster the conditions that make dialogue possible.

On campuses, as in society, open debate is silenced as rhetoric hardens into fixed political positions, drawing impassable lines in the sand between groups. The multiple pressures on freedom of expression include the discourse of patriotism created after 9/11 to legitimate the war on terrorism, the backlash against multiculturalism and affirmative action, the increased diversity of U.S. campuses, and the increasingly corporate management and service orientation of universities. While these social changes suppress free expression, popular media discourses model either radical ideological indoctrination as practiced by Rush Limbaugh and all his imitators on both sides of the political spectrum or forms of oppositional discourse that are either outlandish and irresponsible, as in The Jerry Springer Show, or merely reinforce the viewers’ biases, as in Crossfire and its imitators. Within this...
and Global Citizenship
context, campuses need to support and teach practices of critique and contestation as central to civic engagement, but these practices of freedom need to respect the dignity and value of all members of society.

Diversity
The word “liberal” in “liberal education” originally meant education for free men, an education to prepare men for the exercise of freedom within their polity. For this reason the practice of freedom on campus is deeply tied to the practice of freedom in the larger society and internationally, as well as individually and interpersonally. Yet in every society that called itself a republic or a democracy in the past, free persons or citizens were a privileged minority. This includes the republic of the United States, which did not have universal suffrage until 1920. At the founding of America’s oldest colleges, the civic dimension of the mission of higher education, though framed in a discourse of democracy, was elitist and exclusive. Those who were imagined to require the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in democratic deliberation, those who had access to this form of education, were white men.

As Orlando Patterson (1991) has argued, the Western belief in freedom as a revered and almost uncontested value arose dialectically out of the social structures of slavery and serfdom. In The Souls of Black Folk, W. E. B. DuBois observes that few men ever worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites. (1969, 47)

But achieving freedom in the sense of citizenship and enfranchisement turned out to be a lengthy struggle for African Americans, one still mired in the obstacles posed by voting machines, faulty registrations, and felony laws. The civil rights achievements of the 1960s have also shown that there is more to freedom and citizenship than formal equality under the law.

On U.S. college campuses, the inclusion of women and persons of color as full members of the community of learners has complicated the pedagogical project of liberal education, including especially those dimensions related to civic participation and responsibility. These new members of the academy, first as students and then as professors, brought with them, in their bodies and in their minds, very basic challenges to the tradition. As Renato
Rosaldo puts it, “initial efforts concentrated on getting people in the door. Institutions of higher learning appeared to tell those previously excluded, ‘Come in, sit down, shut up. You’re welcome here as long as you conform to our norms.’” He goes on to make the point that in order to democratize higher education, people need to work together to change the present situation where the higher the perceived social status of the room the less diverse its membership. When people leave a decision-making room and one hears that a consensus was reached, remember to ask: “Who was in the room when the decision was made?” Introducing diversity in such rooms will slow down the process. (1993, xi-xii) Implicitly, Rosaldo raises here the question of civic discourse, of verbal and social processes of deliberation and communication.

In the fifty years since Brown v. Board of Education, this nation has experimented with various models of integration and exclusivity. Brown v. Board was decided on the grounds that “separate but equal” has no place in public education and that students of color in segregated schools, even those with equivalent facilities and resources, are deprived of equal educational opportunities. Turning to higher education today, we find an ironic reversal in the terms of the Brown v. Board reasoning. It is now believed that the most privileged white students attending selective private colleges and universities are deprived if they receive an all-white education (see Bowen and Bok 1998). The belief fifty years ago was that there was something called education, the transmission of knowledge and skills, that was race-neutral and apolitical, and that could be made equally available to all Americans. As a result of integration, especially at the college level, there has been an explosion of new knowledge and pedagogies created by the inclusion of women and people of different classes, races, and cultural backgrounds in the academy. These changes have been hard-won, as the metaphor of the “culture wars” suggests.

Given that democracies and republics have always had their suppressed others, whether internally or in colonies abroad, we wonder whether the attempt to enfranchise, metaphorically speaking, a diverse and historically unequal population is straining a system dependent on having insiders and outsiders, speaking subjects and alien others. The insiders’ club had rules of engagement that did not need to be spoken, and the outsiders had their own systems of resistance and survival. Rosaldo characterizes well the kind of reaction that occurs when new kinds of people are included in a previously homogeneous group:

One reaction is predictable. People who once had a monopoly on privilege and authority will suddenly experience relative deprivation . . . they will feel diminished and may in certain cases find themselves drawn to nativistic movements, perhaps to the National Association of Scholars or other groups bent on practicing curricular apartheid. When people become accustomed to privilege, it appears to be a vested right, a status that is natural and well deserved, a part of the order of things. In the short run, the transition to diversity can be traumatic; in the long run, it promises a great deal. (1993, xii)

Whereas the federal government in the 1960s intervened to integrate the University of Mississippi, there have been subsequent periods of backlash, including the culture wars of the 1980s as well as the current curtailment of civil liberties and charges that academia is a haven for leftist faculty members who seek to indoctrinate students.

Thus, while the battle for integration has been more or less won, despite rearguard actions against affirmative action, the contest has shifted to the nature of the curriculum and pedagogy, and implicitly, the ultimate goals of liberal education. Moreover, the very ability to discuss and debate differences of viewpoint in an open environment has seriously diminished as the larger social climate of neoconservatism has come head to head with increased multiculturalism in the curriculum, pedagogy, and demographics of the campus.

One of the watchwords of groups like Students for Academic Freedom is “intellectual diversity." This is held up as the true diversity that colleges should seek out. While most educators would rally around this concept, since it appears to transform the traditional value of multiple ways of knowing into a contemporary appreciation of cultural diversity, in fact it is
deployed as a weapon against diversity understood as the inclusion of underrepresented groups in the campus and the curriculum. Its main referent is a narrowly construed ideological diversity—Republican vs. Democrat, conservative vs. liberal—and it assumes that liberals are the majority on college campuses; hence, conservatives need “affirmative action” to ensure they are represented. This notion of intellectual diversity also implies that the curriculum needs defending against the allegedly hegemonic forces of political correctness.

It is the case that the portmanteau word “diversity” tends to conflate bodies with perspectives, and this is an issue that needs constant critique. The conflation exists because there are, in fact, at least two very different justifications for diversifying campuses. One is a social justice or restitution motive that applies most clearly to African Americans and Native Americans (though arguably to many others as well), two groups that have been systematically excluded from advancement in U.S. society since the nation’s inception. This is the motive behind affirmative action as it applies to women and these historically excluded groups.

The other motive has two subcategories. One concerns demographics and the intercultural skills required by an increasingly heterogeneous society. The other is the liberal arts notion that good knowledge and thinking result from exposure to many different perspectives and ways of knowing. In her book *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*, the feminist philosopher of science Sandra Harding (1991) argues that adding the perspectives of underrepresented or unrepresented groups to scientific inquiry plays a huge role in knowledge production by adding new vectors of critique. The first things to be revealed are the most basic, and therefore most hidden, assumptions and presuppositions of inquiry. Thus, even in the realm of science, thought by many people to be abstracted from sociocultural influences, new insights are fostered by making scientific inquiry more inclusive.

Nonetheless, the assumption tends to be made, perhaps too easily, that different skin colors bring this diversity with them. “Positionality” is about more than skin color. It describes a specific set of coordinates produced by geography and power, by social class, and by a number of kinds of identity. Most importantly, diversity only adds to a collaborative project of knowledge production if the participants retain a principled openness, a commitment to listening for and across differences. This openness, in turn, presupposes an ethic of respect.

**Triangulating differences**

Citizens of today’s world need to recognize that people situated in different spatial, cultural, economic, and political locations will inevitably perceive events and relationships differently from each other. We need to teach students to seek out understandings from these multiple perspectives and not to rest content with the self-serving views presented in the mainstream culture. Power and interests intervene in the act of seeing, such that differently situated observers actually see different realities.

We are not arguing for a relativist position. Rather, we are proposing a process for creating a complex and multiple “truth” or “reality” that requires understanding and negotiation. Within such a collaborative epistemological process, multiplicity would not be replaced by unity; different viewpoints would be placed in rhizomatic conversation with each other. Using the metaphor of a GPS (Global Positioning System), we argue that the epistemology required of today’s global citizens demands triangulation; it demands readings taken from as
many locations as possible, especially readings that reflect the knower as viewed from outside. This is why study abroad and second language learning are so valuable. Both forms of knowledge and experience reflect back to the student how the country and its citizens look to those outside the U.S. This can be both very disturbing and very liberating for American students.

On our campus, we teach a seminar for students who have been abroad that attempts to model the epistemology represented by a GPS. It is an inquiry into the ethics of global citizenship, focusing on debates over whether “human rights” are a product of Western culture or have universal validity. The students research the politics and discourse of human rights in the nation where they studied, and we read in common a multiplicity of perspectives on human rights. What we find is that, although the specific discourse of human rights is rooted in Western liberal metaphysics of the person, the politics of signing on to a human rights agreement are rich, complex, and offer hope for ways to negotiate across deep metaphysical and epistemological differences.

Freedom as non-domination

Even as we struggle to shift pedagogy and curricula toward issues of civic engagement, the politics of positionality constrain and vex discourse on college campuses—not uninfluenced by the dynamics of national politics. The educational value of what is called “diversity” today is an extension of a core value of liberal education: the emphasis on multiple ways of knowing, on different methods of intellectual inquiry and analysis. The measure of vitality in any intellectual community is the scope and variety of perspectives it can sustain in dynamic engagement. It is the changing nature of knowledge that makes universities dynamic, and change comes about primarily through the productive encounter, the challenge, of differences. Any stance that forecloses the free discussion of differences also forecloses the quest for learning and knowledge creation sufficient to the complexities, both national and global, of the twenty-first century.

One of the major changes brought about by the inclusion of women and people of color in the academy is the degree to which difference is not abstracted from the individual but carried in his or her body, often a marker for a powerful sense of identity. This has posed a fundamental challenge to the ideal of disinterested debate. Where is the line between an abstract debate over the merits of affirmative action and the implication that a particular group of people, possibly including the professor, should not be in the classroom having the debate? Free discussion has probably never been easy, but it has become very difficult today, closed sometimes by outside political forces, by both racism and so-called political correctness, and by disrespect. While freedom is absolutely essential to higher education and to the exercise of vigilance required by democracy, freedom must be exercised with respect toward all members of society.

The political philosophy associated with the republican form of government in Western societies has always emphasized the need to remain vigilant against the power of the state. One of its chief spokespersons today, Philip Pettit, redefines freedom as non-domination to connect the personal, the interpersonal, and the political. Contestation, understood as a relational participation in a collective group process, is essential. “Freedom as non-domination,” Petit writes, supports a conception of democracy under which contestability takes the place usually given to consent; what is of primary importance is not that government does what the people tells it but, on pain of arbitrariness, that people can always contest whatever it is that government does. (1997, ix)

Implicit in this is the fact that citizens must know what a government is doing in order to be able to contest it or to protect themselves against abuses of power.

A college is like a small republic, a space where we should be able to practice the kinds of contestation and vigilance that maintain and support freedom as non-domination, that model this kind of vigilance for our students, and that strengthen our ability to participate critically in the politics of the state.

On the other hand, speaking out in opposition to the state’s policies or to the established position in one’s field or to any kind of power structure is not necessarily pleasant. It may entail being responded to with dismissal or
hostility. However, this is what Pettit is getting at in defining freedom as non-domination. If you know that speaking out according to your conscience or your analysis of a situation means you will be shunned for doing so, are you free or not? There is evidence on campuses across the country that some faculty and students feel that they cannot express their views because they are too solidly opposed by the majority view.

There is also evidence that sometimes when people do speak out they feel crushed by the response. And often that response is not a direct engagement with the point but a communal sense of outrage that the speaker has violated some unspoken code of politeness or niceness. Shunning and dismissal are extremely damaging non-responses. They effectively remove the person they are aimed at from the community, hence taking away freedom understood as civitas or participation in the discourse and action of the res publica. Although often done in the name of politeness, that kind of dismissal or negation of a person’s actuality, his or her belonging, is politely vicious. It is often done to people who don’t fit in because they are different in some way, whether in their sense of manners or their cultural background or their politics.

While vigilance and contestation are essential to freedom in Pettit’s view, so is some identification with the common good, with the need to promote liberty for all. Pettit argues, in relation to the concerns of marginalized groups, that when freedom is defined as non-domination, the common good has to mean that no member of society “can achieve it fully for themselves without its being achieved for all members: no member can hope to achieve it fully for themselves except so far as membership of the group ceases to be a badge of vulnerability” (1997, 259). He is not promoting a liberal notion of color-blindness or a giving up of particular identities. Instead, he is arguing that people have shifting and partial identifications and that they need the capacity to identify in part with the common good of the whole society—though not to relinquish their own racial or gendered or regional identities. So civility does not mean being nice and polite; it means participating in and valuing the collective group, the common good; most importantly, it means believing that everyone’s full and equal freedom to participate must be actively supported and protected.

This may seem like a realistic goal, but it is nonetheless a challenging one. It is easy to practice freedom as non-interference. You don’t have to listen; you don’t have to do anything. Practicing freedom as non-domination asks more of us, but it also promises a higher level of well-being for the collective group.
Our highest professional duty, the ethical commitment most essential to our mission as educators, is to create and maintain a climate on campus that goes beyond a silent and silencing, begrudging tolerance of a diversity of views and is instead a climate of respectful engagement. If we do not—if we cannot—model the method we endorse, we can hardly lament its absence in society at large.

Because ideas are passions for teachers and scholars, differences are often engaged passionately in the academy. But one person’s “passion” may be another person’s idea of aggression. One person’s enjoyment of vigorous argument or debate may be experienced as intimidation by other people. The sine qua non of deliberative dialogue is to create a climate of engagement where passion and respect are mutually reinforcing. Certainly there is a place in serious, respectful dialogue for passion, for ardent expression, for pointed criticism, sometimes even for anger. Colleges and universities should be communities that are able to model modes of dialogue and deliberation, modes of respectful conflict resolution, modes of public debate that productively draw upon diversity to achieve more complex understanding. These are communities situated within the context of a larger society sorely in need of positive models, and we could do no better than to graduate students who have developed their capacities for respectful dialogue on critical issues, especially with others who think differently.

Conclusion

We expect members of our community to be passionate about ideas; in fact, we would be troubled if they were not. But passion and commitment serve our purpose only to the extent that they promote lively engagement, not shut it down, and to the extent that they foster compelling expression, not impede the capacity to listen. To this end, we must continue both to defend the campus as a place of free inquiry and exchange and to encourage modes of discourse that respect the basic human dignity of all engaged in its mission.

If education for citizenship is indeed a goal of American higher education, students have to learn both how to locate themselves, to think critically about their own positionalities, and how to engage various other perspectives on the issues they seek to understand and to judge. And this need for multiple perspectives as the grounds of a global epistemology is also the most basic argument for diversity in liberal education. The curriculum can represent diverse points of view, but that is not enough. Precisely because the world looks different from different vantage points, the students and faculty who comprise a campus need to have different life experiences and different social locations that they can bring to the table in a collaborative or dialogic process of knowledge creation. They also need to get outside the campus, to gather perspectives from the local communities, the nation, and from other parts of the world, and then to subject those triangulations to interpretation and evaluation. This method of inquiry will be both the basis of and the actual process of an ethics of global citizenship.

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NOTES

1. This paper is a revised version of a lecture presented at Roanoke College in October 2004 and subsequently published in the Roanoke College Journal.

2. The ideas in this section are developed more fully in our article “Peripheral Visions: Towards a Geoethics of Citizenship.”

REFERENCES


I AM TRAINED as a counseling psychologist, and for the past thirty years I have taught courses in counseling theory and practice, intercultural communication, college student development (with emphasis on intellectual, interpersonal, moral, and spiritual development), theories of identity formation (especially with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality), adult learning, ethical issues in the professions and organizations, and the psychological aspects of organizations and organizational change. The content of such courses is often challenging and causes students to examine both their own and their peers’ attitudes, values, and perspectives. And because my students are expected to work in teams and small groups, they have significant opportunities for discussion of their perspectives.

I have found it helpful to prepare students both for the intellectual and the interpersonal work that will be expected of them and for how they will be expected to conduct themselves in class. On the first day of class, students are asked to read and reflect upon “Listening to Understand,” which I include as an addendum to all my syllabi. They are then asked to discuss their responses in small groups. We then have a large group discussion, and at the end both the students and I sign a form stating our intentions to abide by the expectations set forth in “Listening to Understand.” I have found that this simple exercise helps students treat each other with respect—especially when the topics are controversial. And it helps students begin to understand the intellectual tasks required of them in the course.

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In addition to the texts in this class, each participant is, in effect, a co-text. Your background and life experiences make up an important part of the class. Your instructor holds the perspective that all classes are essentially intercultural encounters—among individuals in the class, between the readers and any given author, among the authors and the students and the professor. We are all learning how to most effectively learn from one another. Such a classroom requires particular capacities and commitments on our part. It also requires a mutual effort in helping each other both understand the course material and the differing interpretative positions we may bring to a more complex understanding of the material. While each of us seeks to advance our own knowledge, we are also a community in which we are each responsible to help the other members of the community learn effectively. In addition to seeking to understand the context and concepts of the course, we

- seek to acquire intellectual skills and capacities that will enable us to work effectively with the complexities of the course material;
- seek understanding of multiple modes of inquiry and approaches to knowledge and the ability to judge adequate and appropriate approaches from those that are not adequate or appropriate;
- seek to develop increased self-knowledge and knowledge of others;
- seek to understand how the material we are studying relates to our own previous learning, backgrounds, and experiences, and how we can use and apply our new knowledge effectively;
- seek to develop the ability to critique material in a mature manner using our own previous learning and experiences as part of the critique when appropriate;
- seek to develop the communication skills that facilitate our learning and our ability to listen, read, reflect, and study to understand.

In order to accomplish our goals, we need to develop the capacity of listening for understanding. (Of course, listening for understanding can also be applied to how we read and observe as well as listen and communicate.) Listening for understanding involves

- listening for the meaning/standpoint/positionality of both others and the self;
- listening for the affect that results from the standpoint(s);
- staying in communication even when one is confused or fearful or unsure;
- searching for the appropriate response;
- acknowledging that understanding does not imply agreement;
- taking responsibility for one’s own perspectives, stances, and actions;
- seeking to expand one’s complexity, personal integration, and skills so that one can respond in appropriate ways to a wide variety of complex situations.

We will be working with these concepts as we conduct an assessment of student learning preferences and needs during the first weeks of the course.
Many faculty members generally assume that their students understand the purposes of college learning and that they are aware of the assumptions about liberal education embedded in the program configurations designed to advance it. We implicitly believe and sincerely hope that, by following the steps we lay out, our students will develop the habits of heart and mind that characterize the outcomes of a liberal education. Yet this is not necessarily the case. In fact, it may very well be that, as Jerry Graff (2003) has suggested, our students are “clueless” about how to think about liberal learning; how it affects their personal, educational, and professional development; and how it plays a role in their day-to-day lives.

It is easy enough to test this; all we need to do is ask our students. Through the series of focus groups it commissioned to probe students’ understandings and perceptions of liberal education, as well as their attitudes about it, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has done just that. The findings reveal a “serious disconnect between what students value and the vision of liberal education championed by the AAC&U community” (Humphreys and Davenport 2005, 41). The learning outcomes the student participants said they value the least are tolerance and respect for different cultural backgrounds; values, principles, and ethics; expanded cultural awareness and sensitivity; and civic responsibility. And when asked for a definition of liberal learning, many of the students—especially those in high school—were simply at a loss. Overall, the focus group findings suggest that “colleges are not conveying the importance of liberal education to their students,” and that students’ lack of an understanding of liberal education hamstrings their ability to become intentional learners (Schneider and Humphreys 2005, B20).

The findings from the AAC&U student focus groups are not very surprising—indeed, they tend to follow upon and confirm similar findings from previous AAC&U studies (see Schneider 1993; AAC 1991). They are nonetheless troubling, however, and we must find effective ways to address the issues they raise. In this article, I argue that the advising process offers us perhaps the best opportunity for helping our students become more intentional about their own educations, as well as for helping them to recognize the value of the liberal learning outcomes we seek to advance. In order to make the most of this opportunity, however, we must rethink advising and explore new approaches that engage students more broadly. In short, I argue that advising must be reconceived as liberal learning.

**Missed opportunities**
The very learning outcomes that AAC&U found students value least are the ones my campus explicitly incorporated as part of its revised core, Values across the Curriculum. We worked hard to introduce our students to this new core program. We provided workshops; we encouraged advisers to view the core as a four-year program integrated across students’ undergraduate experiences; and we put together a detailed Web site outlining the philosophy behind the core, the different learning outcomes, and how the core opens the curriculum to students.

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If students were accessing the Web site—and our data suggest they were—then they should have developed at least a basic understanding of the educational values inherent in the core program. They should have been able to engage their learning intentionally to craft a coherent liberal learning experience that would integrate with their studies in their major fields. Yet, when I asked my students straightforwardly what they thought about core liberal learning and what they understood about the core, their responses mirrored those of the students in the AAC&U focus groups.

I also pressed my students further, asking whether anyone had ever actually talked to them about the core. More specifically, I asked whether any of them had had conversations with their advisers about the nature of core learning, about how core learning can integrate with their overall undergraduate experiences, or about how their core learning could affect their personal and professional development. I asked this because advising is one of the best opportunities for students to talk about the values of liberal learning in practice. What they had “learned” is that the core was something they had to do; that it could be “knocked out” during their first two years; that if they did it right, they could find courses that would “knock off” both a Core Knowledge area and a Values area simultaneously; that their major and minors would “except” them for core areas; and, of course, that finding courses in which they were interested should help them become more “well-rounded.”

In other words, what I discovered by talking frankly with my students is that we were not conveying the importance of liberal learning through advising. Indeed, we were sending a different message altogether. Students were “learning” that the core is just another cafeteria menu. As Dean Baldwin (1998, 2) suggests, through advising centers, professional advisers, and degree audit systems, we teach students to “steer through the labyrinths of degree requirements and provide useful advice on career choices.” Baldwin argues that, when faced with a student’s interest in a business career or in medical studies, for example, advising services tend to take the paths of least resistance. Advisers are likely to recommend the student majors in business or in biology and then simply to pull out the corresponding requirement sheet. This is not the same as helping students understand liberal learning and its role in their overall educational thinking and planning.

Typically, advising systems are far removed from the classroom and the day-to-day liberal learning experiences that take place between faculty and students; advising operates with only a second-hand understanding of the nature of liberal learning. What students “learn” through advising rarely helps them appreciate the nature or the role of liberal learning, or its value in their lives. Thus, students experience advising as a process of course selection designed to help them meet their degree and registration requirements. We should not be surprised that students come away from the advising process with little understanding of, or commitment to, liberal learning. In order to help students better understand the nature of liberal learning and how it informs their overall undergraduate experiences, advising must be reconceived as a liberal learning experience in itself. Let me illustrate one way to accomplish this.

Advising as problem-based learning

A good problem-based learning approach, according to Kurt Burch (2001), presents to students ill-structured and logically fuzzy problems. Such problems challenge students to think about what they know; to reflect on what they do not understand, what they need to learn, and how to contextualize their learning; and to think about how what they carry with them can color the way they read and misread the problem. Problem-based learning drives students to use their learning in new contexts. It also can help them realize, in practical ways, the need to expand and incorporate different...
types of learning in order to better understand and deal with open-endedness. Through a problem-based approach in class, students are challenged to see that we are constantly rethinking how we know things and to participate in that rethinking.

It does not require much of an analogic leap to see how, through a problem-based learning approach, advising can be reconceived as a collaborative process of teaching and research. Advising as problem-based learning can challenge students’ narrative imaginations and make them question what they value in their own learning. What do they think they know about studies in the major? Are faculty members simply “generic” professors in their majors, or are they field specialists whose interests span disciplinary boundaries? How does student learning in the major integrate with learning in the core and other studies across the curriculum? Would students engage their learning differently if they could see how their personal educational goals are reflected in the courses they take? Most importantly, depending on how the problem is posed in advising scenarios, a problem-based learning approach to advising can put the learning outcomes that students value least into real-world contexts that help them realize the importance and the practicality of a liberal education.

Let me briefly give a few examples. In advising premed students, I am often struck by how many of them are biology or chemistry majors. The first question I ask them is why. Invariably, they respond by saying that they want to go to medical school—a fair enough answer. But then I always come back with, “I am a bit confused. Can you help me? I thought you wanted to be doctor, not a biologist (or chemist). What do doctors do?” This is usually a stumper, but I do not leave it there. I try to pose a provocative problem: “Let’s say you are a doctor now. How would you relate to the difficulties a traditional Islamic woman faces...
when undergoing a standard physical examination?” There is no simple answer to this problem, and there are many variations on it. Consider the problem the musician Prince has with his potential hip replacement. Both examples raise the same issues for students.

Advising as problem-based learning challenges these students to rethink what makes up premedical studies. Rather than providing answers, it enables us to assign a research question: what learning would you need to have in your background to think through this problem? Students discover their own answers. For example, they might begin to consider how ethics or cultural anthropology or religious studies might integrate with their premedical studies. Given the assignment, students simply have to think about how practical liberal learning can affect the day-to-day issues they would be likely to encounter as doctors.

We can take a similar problem-based learning approach in any advising situation. How often do we ask students to explain what they mean when they say they want to major in English, for example, or political science? How often do we ask prospective business majors to tell us something that isn’t related to business or to talk about the people with whom they expect to work? How often do we ask education students to describe the classroom in which they might find themselves teaching? How often do we ask students to think about the difference between the requirements that make up an academic major and the integrated learning that makes up a field of study? For that matter, how often do we talk with students about the difference between completing the requirements for a major and understanding a field of study? Each of these questions sets a problem and can begin the problem-based learning process because each challenges students to think about their assumptions about learning.

As Richard Light (2001) has noted, questions like these encourage students to talk about bigger ideas with their advisers. Such conversations can affect students’ personal perspectives on learning and help them to integrate liberal learning more intentionally into their studies. And in talking with their advisers about bigger ideas, students begin to see not only how their learning affects their professional preparation, but also how it “fits into the bigger picture of their lives, and what new ideas might be worth considering” (Light 2001, 89). In these advising contexts, liberal learning becomes quite practical, and in the
end, students are challenged to rethink and take ownership of how they formulate their own learning, beliefs, and values.

In these advising scenarios, students are challenged to put themselves into different situations vicariously and asked how they can use their learning to understand and empathize. Equally important, they learn that what they glean from their courses is akin to any reader response; that is, it is necessarily “filtered” through the alembic of their personal experiences and the immediacy of their educational goals. Most of the students I have worked with have asked some version of this question: why hasn’t someone talked to us about this before?

**Conclusion**

The problem is not that students are averse to the liberal learning outcomes AAC&U member institutions hold important. Rather, it is that we have been remiss in introducing and orienting students to the nature of liberal learning and university study. We have not equipped students to engage their learning intentionally, nor have we helped them to understand how their learning engages their lives. We have not demonstrated to them the interdisciplinary nature of liberal learning, and we have not modeled that ourselves.

None of this will be corrected through advising as students now experience it. Too often, advising has been considered the sorry stepchild in the academy—and perhaps rightfully so. But if we hope to address the issues raised by our students’ own understandings of and attitudes toward liberal learning, then we must rethink advising; we must redefine advising as a practical liberal learning endeavor.

I have outlined just one possible iteration of advising as liberal learning. Through a problem-based learning approach, we can help students “encounter” the communities they live in locally, nationally, and globally. We can help them understand through experience that the ways we socially construct meaning are the same as the ways we learn to understand our own personal meanings. We can help them understand that the incongruities they encounter through liberal learning—incongruities that they might not otherwise encounter—are as open-ended as their daily experiences are.

This kind of advising can help students realize how their contextual and critical thinking continually helps them examine and be sensitive to new contexts that challenge their ways of understanding. Finally, we can help students understand that the liberal learning outcomes they say they value least in their undergraduate education are the very same ones that can help them examine their personal commitments to learning and to themselves. This is advising as it could be.

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**REFERENCES**


Engaged Learning across the Curriculum

The Vertical Integration

There is a relatively new and decidedly healthy educational movement emerging across the United States, from grade schools to high schools, from community colleges to graduate programs at the nation’s most prestigious universities. The movement goes by the name of “engaged learning.” One measure of its au courant status is the decision of the Association of American Colleges and Universities to devote the full winter 2005 issue of Peer Review, a quarterly journal on emerging trends in undergraduate education, to the topic. Yet while an increasing number of educators agree that “engaged learning” is superior to learning that is decontextualized or rote, what they actually mean by engaged varies widely.

To help sort out the various usages, Stephen Bowen (2005, 4) has identified four ways of thinking about engagement: as “engagement with the learning process,” “engagement with the object of study,” “engagement with contexts,” and “engagement with the human condition.” His taxonomy, by distinguishing students’ engagement with different kinds of content and with process, has a clarifying heuristic purpose. As Bowen’s account of engagement shows, the nature and applicability of learning depend upon the student’s relationship to the subject matter.

While the character of engaged learning as a social movement is new, the idea that students learn best when they are “engaged” is centuries old. John Dewey, the dean of a distinctly American philosophical tradition called pragmatism, founded the University of Chicago Laboratory School on the principle that students would learn best if they were engaged in the process of growing food in a garden, preparing it in the kitchen, and finally bringing it to the table for consumption.

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In *The Metaphysical Club*, Louis Menand (2001, 323) describes how food was used in the school’s curriculum:

One of John Dewey’s curricular obsessions was cooking. The children cooked, and served lunch once a week. The philosophical rationale is obvious enough: preparing a meal is goal-directed activity, it is a social activity, and it is an activity continuous with life outside the school. But Dewey incorporated it into the practical business of making lunch: arithmetic (weighing and measuring ingredients, with instruments the children made themselves), chemistry and physics (observing the process of combustion), biology (diet and digestion), geography (exploring the natural environments of plants and animals), and so on.

Cooking became the basis for most of the science taught at the school. It turned out to have so much curricular potential that making cereal became a three-year continuous course of study for all children between the ages of six and eight “with no sense of monotony on the part of either pupils or teachers.”

This article is about two experiments to integrate food into education: one at the K–12 level, in the public school system in Berkeley, California, and the other at the undergraduate level, at Yale University. Both of these experiments draw on the pedagogically engaging aspects of cultivating, cooking, and eating food. Since food “engages” every human at the beginning of the life cycle, and continues to engage us until nearly our last breath, it cuts across all aspects of social life. No matter one’s station, as Shakespeare famously put it in the last lines of Richard II’s mournful rumination in his reflections to the Duke of Aumerle, “I live with bread like you, feel want, / Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus, / How can you say to me, I am a king?” It is in this sense that educators have an underutilized opportunity for an across-the-curriculum integration—whereby many disciplines can be more creatively “engaged,” and hopefully, can become even more engaging.

**The Berkeley School Lunch Initiative**

The Chez Panisse Foundation, in partnership with the Berkeley Unified School District and the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, has pioneered a project that marries content and process, initiating a bold and comprehensive revamping of the lunch program for Berkeley’s entire school system. In fall 2005, Berkeley launched the School Lunch Initiative to transform how school lunches are prepared and served. Even more significantly, from the standpoint of engaged learning, this project will have students tilling the soil and planting,
learning about biochemistry via soil nutrition enrichment, and learning about dietary requirements through cellular biology. The project is being piloted at Berkeley’s Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, where beginning in 2007 students will be served a wholesome, freshly prepared lunch in a new facility that is designed to accommodate informal learning, student-teacher interaction, and student participation.

The goal of this project is to revolutionize both the curriculum and the pedagogy used in Berkeley’s schools. Rather than being “simply a school lunch that is nutritious and healthy”—an important and very worthy goal in itself—the Berkeley School Lunch Initiative is designed to engage students across the curriculum in new ways, fostering learning about subjects that have otherwise been compartmentalized and fragmented.

This use of food as a curricular focal point will require a revisiting of pedagogy. Faculty will need to retool, not so much by learning more about biochemistry as by learning how to draw connections between their subject matter and the engaged forms of learning to which their students may be more easily drawn. We are not Pollyannish. There will be hurdles and stumbling blocks, from active resistance to inertia and indifference. That is inevitable when institutional and organizational changes of this magnitude are proposed. Berkeley’s
This type of program offers not only health benefits and improved educational outcomes, but environmental and economic benefits as well.

Despite a wide range of studies indicating that Americans should decrease their fat consumption, the most recent report suggests that we increase our fat intake from 30 percent to 35 percent (Food and Nutrition Board 2002; see also Campbell and Campbell 2004). Worse still, the report tells us that added sugars should comprise no more than 25 percent of total calories—as if that figure, which refers to sugars added to foods and beverages during production, was acceptable. The major sources of such sugars are candy, soft drinks, fruit drinks, and heavily sugared cakes, pies, and pastries.

This may be the time to place a foot in the door and propose a new way of thinking about food in schools. First, with an epidemic of diabetes among youth, and more public awareness of the sharp increase in childhood obesity across the nation, we may be primed, if not fully prepared, for the introduction of an innovative alternative. The four-part front-page series on the diabetes epidemic published by the New York Times in January 2006 is one example of this growing attention to the health crisis we now face.

Second, an uncritical acceptance of the recently approved guidelines from the Food and Nutrition Board will exacerbate the already existing gap between the wealthy and the poor. In some jurisdictions, there is already a retreat of the fast-food industry in response to a vigorous assault from proactive parents. But these developments have been sporadic and isolated, and none has resulted in a model program across a whole school system. It is in this context that the Berkeley experiment holds great promise.

While integration of food into the curriculum has mainly occurred at grade and secondary school levels, our colleges and universities can also play an important role. The collection of baseline data at the outset of such a demonstration project is vital to convincing others about the utility of the model. Partnerships between local schools and nearby university research centers would begin to build bridges and provide needed continuity between educational levels for this “content and process” of engaged learning.

This type of program offers not only health benefits and improved educational outcomes,
but environmental and economic benefits as well. The School Lunch Initiative will procure, to the greatest extent possible, local, sustainably grown and raised foods. Imagine the purchasing power of a school district with ten thousand students. One school alone would require five hundred pounds of potatoes per day. The increased demand for organic produce would reduce pesticides in our topsoil and water supply, improve air quality, and provide significant economic stimulus to the community. As more middle schools and high schools around the country pursue these kinds of initiatives, students will increasingly demand similar programs when they enter colleges and universities. We already have some evidence of this.

**The Yale Sustainable Food Project**

Yale University is the site of an engaged learning project that has captured the imagination of undergraduates and built upon the university’s commitment to nurturing informed, responsible citizens. Beginning in 2001, a consortium of Yale students, faculty, and staff—responding to an initiative proposed by President Richard Levin and chef Alice Waters—founded the Yale Sustainable Food Project. An experiential learning program that brings food from the Yale garden to the Yale dining halls, the Sustainable Food Project is a lab for extended, sensory learning. As a result of the project, there is now a one-acre farm on campus—a launching site for accredited academic courses, informal workshops, and campus events highlighting food and agriculture. Through such activities, the project supports both hands-on knowledge of plant biology and careful long-term thinking about the relationship between economics and ethics.

The campus farm is simultaneously a productive market garden, a teaching space, and a testing ground for innovative agricultural
practices. Each week, undergraduate and graduate students volunteer at the farm for experiential learning about the connection between food and the land. The project’s summer internship offers six Yale undergraduates the opportunity to engage the theory and practice of sustainable agriculture, and to participate in the preparation, sharing, and celebration of food. This year, twenty students applied for the six intern positions. In an end-of-summer survey, each of the interns reported that the internship will strongly influence their life decisions.

Moreover, the project has fostered new avenues of academic exploration at the university. Student term papers, senior theses, and doctoral dissertations have explored the program’s potential role across disciplines and its impact on the local economy. There has been a marked increase in courses related to food and agriculture in disciplines as diverse as biology, psychology, forestry, history, and political science. Over three hundred students enrolled in The Politics, Biology, and Psychology of Food, a course taught by Professor Kelly Brownell. A postdoctoral fellow is now examining the impact of sustainable food and the farm on students’ well-being.

In collaboration with Yale University Dining Services, the project aims to develop partnerships with farmers to nourish the local residents and the local economy. In 2003, it began a test kitchen in one of Yale’s undergraduate dining halls, Berkeley College, where the menu was revamped to reflect seasonality and sustainability. The experiment was such a success that students counterfeited identification to try to get into the dining hall. A year later, the program expanded, and today some local organic food is served at all of Yale’s dining halls. Most significantly, in the 2004–5 academic year, the project diverted about $1.5 million dollars of Yale’s food budget into the region’s economy to support farmers, processors, and producers practicing sustainable methods.

It should be clear that this project has the potential not just to transform diet and nutrition, but also to build public support for sustainable methods of food production.

The Yale experience is a viable “demonstration model” of the appeal of engaged learning—albeit one that now exists only in a small corner of the educational experience. But there are many other ways in which colleges and universities can nurture such projects and expand them to the mutual advantage of students, faculty, and local communities.

As a point of entry, overseeing the collection of baseline data at the very beginning of these innovative programs is essential. Universities are well equipped to do early inventory-taking research that will help measure the effectiveness of such projects as the School Lunch Initiative. Nearby schools of public health, of medicine, and of education can begin by “taking the temperature” of the situation, documenting not only current levels of obesity and diabetes, but also current levels of student knowledge about nutrition.

The necessary step of convincing school boards around the country of the benefits of intervention is best achieved by university-based researchers publishing their results. This kind of vertical integration of engaged learning has considerable potential to deepen connections between higher education and K–12, and simultaneously to address issues of education and health.

Given the current crisis of childhood obesity and diabetes, an intervention which improves health and, by extension, increases opportunity for school success could not come at a more critical time.

To respond to this article, e-mail liberaled@aacu.org, with the authors’ names on the subject line.

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ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL CHALLENGES facing institutions of higher education in the twenty-first century is the need to be more accountable for producing equitable educational outcomes for students of color. Although access to higher education has increased significantly over the past two decades, it has not translated into equitable educational outcomes. Not only do African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans have lower graduation rates than whites and Asian Americans, they also experience inequalities in just about every indicator of academic success—from earned grade point average to placement on the dean’s list to graduation rates in competitive majors. The incidence of unequal educational outcomes for minority students is not always visible, however; the disaggregation of data on educational outcomes is not a routine practice at the great majority of colleges and universities.

Since 2001, researchers at the Center for Urban Education have been working with colleges and universities in California, and more recently in Colorado, Washington, and Wisconsin, in the development and pilot-testing of Equity for All, an institutional change intervention designed to close the equity gap in higher education. Among the aims of Equity for All are (1) to increase campus members’ awareness of differences in educational outcomes across racial and ethnic groups, and (2) to encourage “equity-mindedness” in the ways campus members make sense of unequal educational outcomes and the role they play in eliminating them.

As we use it, the concept of equity-mindedness is distinct from prevailing ways of conceptualizing issues related to the participation of minority students in higher education, specifically deficit thinking and diversity thinking. From a deficit standpoint, unequal outcomes are attributed to the personal characteristics of the students who experience them. From a diversity standpoint, the dominant concerns are inclusiveness, intercultural communication, and cross-race relationships.

By contrast, the equity standpoint regards the educational status of historically underrepresented students in all types of institutions, not just those that are predominantly white and elite, as representing the greatest challenge facing higher education practitioners. The critical distinction between equity and deficit thinking is in how the problem of inequality in educational outcomes is framed. In deficit thinking, the unit of analysis and intervention is focused on the students, who are viewed as having a learning deficiency that can be addressed with new teaching techniques, supplementary programs, and add-on academic support systems to compensate for the deficiency. In equity thinking, the points of focus are the practitioner—administrators and faculty alike—and the institution. Thus, from an equity standpoint, practitioners themselves are viewed as the solution to students’ learning problems.
from the Standpoint of Equity
Individual transformation through inquiry

Through the execution of their everyday roles as teachers, advisers, counselors, and managers, campus members have the potential to impact, positively or negatively, the educational outcomes of minority group students. The impact of an individual is mediated by his or her awareness of racial patterns in educational outcomes and by the ways he or she makes sense of these patterns. The realization of this potential depends, first, on the extent of individuals' awareness of race-based inequalities within their own context, and second, on their having the knowledge and experience to make sense of them from the standpoint of equity, rather than deficit.

Sociocultural theories suggest that individuals learn and change as a consequence of collaborative engagement in productive activity. Organizational theories suggest that there are different types of learning and that not all learning results in transformative change. In fact, they suggest that most learning within organizations consists of single-loop learning, whereas change—whether at the individual or the institutional level—requires double-loop learning (Argyris and Schön 1996). The difference between single- and double-loop learning is that the former encourages individuals to view a problem functionally and search for structural or programmatic solutions. In contrast, double-loop learning entails the ability to reflect on a problem from within, in relation to one's own values, beliefs, and practices. Simply put, the difference is that the single-loop learner locates the problem externally and seeks to change others. Conversely, the double-loop learner is more apt to start from the self and engage in reflection that brings about self-change in values, beliefs, and practices.

Learning and self-change are enabled through the engagement of practitioners as researchers in a collaborative activity to define and contextualize the particularities of a problem as it exists within their own milieu. Equity for All consists of phases where the learning activities are progressively more complex and intense. During the first phase, “data-based awareness,” practitioners construct an “equity scorecard” (see Bensimon 2004). In the second phase, “contextualized problem defining,” practitioners interview African American and Latino students as a strategy to learn about and reflect on how these students experience academic and social life on campus.

Racial and ethnic inequalities in educational outcomes are present, although not always visible or acknowledged, in research universities, selective liberal arts colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, urban community colleges, and predominantly minority institutions; yet the details of these inequalities are distinctive. Variations across institutions necessitate that practitioners develop local knowledge. We developed contextualized problem defining as an alternative to the compensatory programmatic interventions commonly put in place once campus members become aware of inequalities in educational outcomes.

Defining the problem

Contextualized problem defining entails teams of faculty members and administrators working collaboratively as researchers on the problem of unequal outcomes. The composition of the teams depends on the kind of inquiry undertaken. The members of the teams, with our assistance as facilitators, design and conduct the inquiry project, thus creating locally meaningful knowledge. By becoming involved as researchers in a collaborative inquiry, the participants develop deeper knowledge about the problem; they may also come to problematize their assumptions about the nature of the problem as well as their attitudes, beliefs, and practices vis-à-vis minority student groups.

Thus, contextualized problem defining represents both a method of gathering and analyzing data as well as an intervention aimed at developing equity thinking among faculty members and other critical institutional actors. Contextualized problem defining consists of three elements: situated inquiry, practitioner-as-researcher, and community of practice.

Situated Inquiry. A faculty member can become an expert about an individual student through purposeful inquiry into the student’s educational history and by reflecting on the correspondence between the student’s situation and the assumptions underlying the faculty member’s practices. Rather than accepting inequities in educational outcomes as inevitable, the professional begins to consider how to adapt his or her methods of teaching or advising to align them with the students’ ways of learning. Becoming an expert on the educational
history of one or more students can empower a practitioner to become a change agent.

Practitioner-as-researcher. The purpose of inquiry is to bring about change at individual, organizational, and societal levels. Guided by outside facilitators, teams of faculty members collect data and create knowledge about local problems. Above all, it is important for the insiders to assume ownership of their findings. The outcome is knowledge that heightens the members’ awareness of what is occurring within their own institutions and increases their motivation to effect change. Thus, the knowledge produced in this model is practical and effective in directing changes. Participating in an inquiry group can increase members’ awareness of a problem, make them more conscious of their capacities for action, and empower them to use their newly acquired expertise to influence others (Bensimon, Polkinghorne, Bauman, and Vallejo 2004).

Community of practice. The kind of learning we wish to promote—e.g., learning that inequities exist, learning how students experience their own learning within the academic and social context of a particular campus, learning how to experiment with new ways of teaching or advising—is more likely to happen in conversation with others. However, participation in a community of practice is not simply a matter of attending meetings or events. A fundamental condition for situated learning is social interaction through collaboration. The group of faculty, as practitioner-researchers, forms a community of practice (Wenger 1998)—practitioners who organize around some form of knowledge and develop shared commitment, responsibility, and identity with regard to this knowledge. Learning happens through shared social interactions and dialogic conversations within the community of practice.

An example
The following example is based on our experience with a four-year college that collaborated with us in developing the methods and activities that comprise the contextualized problem-defining approach. The inquiry team was formed in response to a review of numerical data that revealed noticeable differences in the educational outcomes of African Americans and Latinos. As a result of the team’s data-based awareness, team members realized that they needed to develop a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to these outcomes. The team agreed that interviews would be the most appropriate method for learning how students view their experiences on campus, including their beliefs and attitudes about the institution and about themselves as learners. While this campus chose student interviews as the method of contextualized problem defining, other inquiry approaches are possible.

The team of faculty interviewers agreed that each member would interview two to three African American or Latino students three times over their freshman and sophomore years. Interviewing the students more than once allowed faculty to gain trust and to follow the students across their first two years of college.
In order to prepare for the interviews, team members participated in a one-day training provided by Equity for All researchers. Many of the team members were not formally trained in interview techniques; the training session provided opportunities to discuss the process and mechanics. The interview team worked together to develop the interview protocol, focusing the questions on defining more specifically the inequalities in educational outcomes that were reported in the equity scorecard the campus team created.

The team met before and after each round of interviews. These research meetings provided a space where faculty members could discuss the themes and interesting findings that emerged from their interviews. The discussions were important in developing the protocol for subsequent interviews, and they were important as opportunities to discuss the experience of meeting and interviewing a student, the difficulties of asking race-related questions—particularly when the team member and the student were not from the same racial group—and the often surprising ways students were interpreting their environment.

**Faculty experiences**

One of the principles of contextual problem defining is that faculty members, through situated learning, have to think critically about the situation of students of color in order to assume greater accountability for equitable educational outcomes. Toward this end, our objectives were for the faculty participants to understand the cultural and structural barriers...
students of color face in gaining equal academic outcomes; to engage in critical thinking about the social, political, and structural forces that affect students’ experiences; and to become empowered to address unequal outcomes.

To evaluate our progress in achieving these objectives, over the course of eighteen months, we interviewed and observed four white faculty members who participated on this team from its inception. Based on our evaluation, we provide glimpses of faculty members’ experiences in contextualized problem defining to illustrate the potential of this approach as a means of fostering learning and change that reflect the emergence of equity thinking and doing. The excerpts provided below are taken from interviews conducted with each participating faculty member after each round of student interviews. In some cases, we also provide excerpts from conversations that took place during the research meetings of the inquiry group.

Barbara

After hearing stories about professors who shut out minority students or who “hadn’t created a space that made [alternative] viewpoints welcome” in the classroom, Barbara, a professor of biology, began to think about how she approached students in her own classroom. She confessed that she often connected with students who think or behave as she does, and sometimes dismissed those who do not. “What it made me think about,” Barbara reflected, “is that I need to make sure that I leave a space open in the classroom for people that may not think the same way that I think.” She concluded that she needed to give more attention and feedback to students of color in her classes, especially early in the semester before they fell through the academic cracks.

One of the students Barbara interviewed had participated in the campus multicultural summer program and reported making strong connections to peers in the summer cohort. The student “needed to have this group of like-minded, like-experienced students that she felt she could rely on.” This reliance on the students’ peers lasted throughout the first year. This student’s story made Barbara “think how important that sort of pre-college experience can be to some of our students.” The following summer, Barbara decided to teach in the multicultural summer program.

Grace

Grace, another biology professor, felt that the way the student interviews “affected [her] behavior most was as an adviser.” While some students relied on advisers for signatures alone, others “sat down with them and talked about all kinds of things.” Grace realized that “personal involvement is a big component in how [the interviewees] feel about school, how they feel about themselves.” Based on her student interviews, Grace identified work-study and financial aid as issues that are particularly critical to success, and she responded by discussing financial matters with her own advisees. For example, with an African American student, she made a concerted effort to broach topics pertaining to summer employment or internship opportunities. “I’m trying to keep on top of his work-study commitment, and I never would have thought of that before.”

For Grace, one of the most poignant lessons came from an interview with a Latina whose first language was not English. “I found out how she has struggled to find her place and her voice in this community. I have learned how she struggles with participation in class with the added burden of thinking about how she will be perceived every time she opens her mouth.”

The interview process also helped Grace to problematize the notion of diversity. Her research team found that students felt misled by campus recruiting strategies that painted a picture of a diverse campus. “It’s a calling card and a money maker to call itself diverse,” Grace reflected. “Maybe this is backfiring in a way. Maybe [students] feel a burden about carrying this banner, but it’s not as diverse as its banner said. Maybe we need to work more at the substance and a little bit less on the window dressing.”

Jack

An English professor who has held a variety of leadership roles on campus, Jack also found himself thinking about the interview process in relation to student advisement. He felt he had learned things about students that could, in turn, help him to become a more effective adviser. “I probably am in a position to help [the interviewees] more than I am with the students who actually come to me for advice under the structures of the college’s advising program,” he said. “I should probably just spend more time talking, one-on-one, with my students, period.”
In speaking about “Anglo, mainstream, upper-middle-class, mainly male faculty” like himself, Jack said,

I think we need, first of all, to be honest and to recognize that racial, ethnic, economic differences really are very significant. That they’re not matters of indifference to our students. That your color, your family background, your economic background, your cultural background, have tremendous consequences for who you are in the classroom, and for those things that the professor sees. And I think, because there’s a lot of work involved in acknowledging that, or in doing something about it once you’ve acknowledged it, I think that we often want to shy away from it.

Just to acknowledge these issues is particularly difficult for white faculty, Jack realized, especially those who want to believe that discrimination is not a problem in higher education.

**Matt**

During the summer break following the first year of interviews, Matt, a mathematics professor, decided to send an e-mail to the students he had interviewed during their freshman year. In response, he received “an e-mail from the woman who was totally disconnected when I first interviewed her…. She said, ‘It makes me feel so good to hear from you since not that many people write me and it makes me happy to know a faculty member thinks about me and my summer.’” Matt reported that the interviews helped him make a personal connection with a student who was vulnerable to dropping out. “It is one thing that is going to keep the student here, make them successful and feel that they belong here.”

At the end of the project, Matt reflected on his experience interviewing students:

This project has been invaluable to me as I weave the personal stories of three of our students of color, their perceptions of the institution, with my perceptions of the institution, our policies, and our structures. It helps me gain a deeper sense of difficult questions about equity that must be asked and must be addressed. It helps me think about how I bring my own experiences and, yes, prejudices to the shaping of my teaching and the other work I do in this institution, and how this may or may not resonate with all of our students.

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**Conclusion**

None of the excerpts provided above reveals evidence of a major breakthrough in thinking. In fact, one could easily dismiss the insights gained by these faculty members as elementary knowledge that should be familiar to anyone who has read the literature on the importance of student-faculty relationships, stereotype threat, or white privilege. These excerpts are significant, however, insofar as they demonstrate how much more powerful learning can be when individuals construct their own knowledge about these concepts within their own context. As they become aware of specific cultural and structural experiences that impede student success within their own campus, faculty members attain a clearer responsiveness about the issues that need to be tackled.

The individuals involved in this project have the motivation to face a problem that others may not see or, if they do, may accept as inevitable. Through the interviews, they are learning what they do not know about minority students; they are learning to question their assumptions; and they are learning to problematize diversity. Thus, the most promising outcome of contextualized problem defining is the potential to inspire agency that is grounded in critical reflection and that prompts individuals to bring about change from the inside.

To respond to this article, e-mail liberaled@aacu.org, with the authors’ names on the subject line.

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**REFERENCES**


A few years ago, at a seminar meant to help college presidents ground their thinking about the issues they face as campus leaders in some of the best insights of classic texts, I read for the first time John Milton's *Areopagitica: A speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing to the parliament of England* (1985). Originally published in 1644, *Areopagitica* makes a powerful—and precocious—argument for freedom of speech and against censorship in publishing. After twenty years as a college president, having experienced and observed many calls to censor, I've come to believe that there is not much to know on the topic beyond what Milton wrote over 350 years ago.

*Areopagitica* was published in response “to Parliament’s ordinance for licensing the press of June 14, 1643.” The effect of the ordinance against which Milton wrote “was to give Archbishop Laud, who was also Chancellor of the University of Oxford, actual control over every press in England, with power to stop publication of any book ‘contrary to . . . the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England.’” This was deeply disturbing to Milton, who wrote, “as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: [he] who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God’s image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye” (720).

*Areopagitica* becomes more libertarian as it progresses. In the early pages, Milton distinguishes scandalous, seditious, libelous, blasphemous, and atheistical writing—which he says everyone would, of course, be willing to suppress, even in advance of publication—from everything else, which should be completely free from constraint. By the end, however, Milton suggests that even these distinctions might not be tenable. There he says, “Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties” (746).

Milton explains why censorship is so antithetical to a free and democratic society in a fourfold argument. First, he says, where there has been censorship there has also been extreme political repression. Censorship is associated with the most despicable of societies. Surely Parliament would not want people elsewhere in the world to see England in that light. If a book proves to be bad, in the opinion of educated critics, it can be ignored. Or, in a society with freedom to publish, it can be attacked. Many responses other than censorship are available.

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Second, according to Milton, the reading of literally anything has some basic, beneficial effects, even the reading of error and untruth. Exposure to error leads to greater understanding of how to locate the truth (727). (Milton doesn’t say, of course, how much error and untruth you have to read to gain the beneficial effects he describes.)

Third, Milton argues that prior restraint is not a practical method for achieving the goals of the censors. Banning a book is counterproductive because it will ensure that it is read. Further, how will one find good censors in a society that has censored its literature if knowing how to distinguish truth from falsity is learned only from having read both? How will potential censors get any practice? In addition, what about all the books that have already been published? And why just books? What about theater, dance, and normal conversation? To censor all of these modes of expression would require a massive governmental or church apparatus that would tie up huge resources that could be put to better uses. Here Milton has a scary vision of one of the most important features of the modern totalitarian state; it is one of the best examples of the precocity of Areopagitica.

Finally, Milton argues that licensing the publishers will have a chilling effect on truth-seeking and knowledge creation, much to the detriment of England, particularly in its attempt to remain economically competitive with the rest of Europe. For knowledge leads to the development of technology, and technology leads to the creation of new products and more efficient means of producing old products. I was stunned to read Milton on this point; he might just as well have been writing in a modern business magazine or the Wall Street Journal.
Because he believed England to be innately superior to other countries in these matters, Milton thought censorship would hurt England above all other countries:

Lords and Commons of England, consider what nation it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are the governors; a nation not slow an dull, but of a quick, ingenious and piercing spirit, acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to. (742)

For Milton, the pursuit of knowledge is inherently messy; there will of necessity be much conflict of opinion; therefore, tolerance of the views of others is critical. Intellectual conflict within a society is a sign of health. Out of difference comes a larger coherence, a better whole. He says it beautifully, I think: “Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making” (743).

What to do
Our pursuit of knowledge in higher education is frequently messy, but the best colleges and universities have about them a kind of intellectual scratchiness. I’m not sure exactly what the right scratchiness coefficient is for a university, but I do know that it’s greater than zero and that great universities, especially, must allow very wide latitude for their students, faculty, and staff to express themselves freely. But the freedom to speak and the freedom to publish carry with them great responsibilities. Sometimes people misuse these freedoms and offend deeply the spirit of a learning community, or its members individually. But Milton convinces us, I believe, that in a free society, absent a clear and present danger, the response to such offense by church, state, college, or individual should not—in fact, cannot—be prior restraint or the imposition of a general program of censorship. The corrosive effects of censorship, Milton argues, outweigh any conceivable positive benefits.

On the other hand, out of fear of being accused of intolerance, we must not let our special sensitivity to the issue of free speech keep us from challenging truly offensive speech. Individuals must use the freedom to speak and publish to confront those who misuse it. Our freedoms to speak and publish are protected, but we are not insulated from the consequences of what we say. Only by having the courage to speak out can we ensure that those who speak and write offensively—as each of us defines that—are not insulated from the consequences of what they say. This is not always easy to do, but we must have the courage to do it.

At the same time, we must find ways to say what we need to say with civility. In response to urging by a colleague, a faculty member asked how we should define civility. The colleague proposed this simple rule: “Civility is challenging ideas as strenuously as you wish, while refraining from attacking people (as individuals or groups).” Our students should leave college more skilled at civility than they were when they came.

I do not believe that students coming to college today are less civil than they were a generation ago, but there is much greater diversity on our campuses now, so our discourses will challenge students, and be challenged by them, in new ways. There are voices at the table today—a very good thing—that were absent a generation ago. They do not share all of the presuppositions of our historic majority populations. When it is presuppositions that differ, civil discourse is much tougher. We have to pay more systematic attention to modeling civil discourse ourselves for our students, teaching good listening skills, and helping students see that the essence of liberal education is openness to the possibility of changing one’s mind based on the good arguments or new data one encounters. Though it happens too rarely, I am always heartened when I hear someone say, “Gee, I never thought of it that way before.”

Good discourse does not, of course, pretend that conflicting views do not exist. Rather, as Milton said so well, “opinion in good men [and women] is but knowledge in the making” (743).

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Two New Publications on Global Learning

AAC&U’s global learning initiative, Shared Futures: Global Learning and Social Responsibility, has released two new publications. *Assessing Global Learning: Matching Good Intentions with Good Practice*, by Caryn McTighe Musil, is designed to help colleges and universities construct and assess the impact of varied, well-defined, developmental pathways through which students can acquire global learning.

*Shared Futures: Global Learning and Liberal Education*, by Kevin Hovland, examines the evolving definitions of global learning in the context of previous reform efforts in the areas of diversity, democracy, and civic engagement. It also illuminates how global learning converges with the most powerful current models of liberal education.

*Assessing Global Learning: Matching Good Intentions with Good Practice*, by Caryn McTighe Musil

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48pp/2006
$20

*Shared Futures: Global Learning and Liberal Education*, by Kevin Hovland

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AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,000 accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size.

AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education at both the national and local levels and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.