THOUGHT & ACTION

Nazis on Campus * HBCUs & Online Learning * Black Commencement * The Future of Faculty Unions

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Overview

by Mary Ellen Flannery

“The scenario is by now familiar. Enrollment projections are ominous, budgets squeezed, academic programs threatened, decision-making authority wrenched from faculty…”

Indeed, it is a familiar scenario, which resonates with many NEA Higher Ed readers who observe the retreat of public funds from their public institutions, the elimination of academic programs on their campuses, and a growing battle over shared governance. But that line, written by Roxanne Bradshaw, a former Pike’s Peak Community College instructor who also served as secretary-treasurer of NEA, was first published by Thought & Action in 1985. “Reality is made up of circles, but we see straight lines,” says MIT scientist Peter Senge.

Of course, we have new and evolved threats to public higher education and unions today. We have billionaires dumping their spare change into public universities where their donations buy faculty seats, curriculum control, and a few generations of political bias. We see a growing number of adjunct or non-tenure-track faculty who are shackled by penury and muzzled by job insecurity. And we see new, corporate-funded attacks on the rights of faculty and stuff to collectively bargain. Most of all, we see the diminishment of public higher education as a critical piece of the American Dream.

Welcome to the last issue of Thought & Action, NEA’s peer-reviewed journal of higher education since 1984. After 34 years, many dozens of issues, and the profound involvement of hundreds of NEA Higher Ed members who have served and supported their peers as critical readers and reviewers, the journal will cease publication with these pages. The 2018-2020 NEA budget, approved this July by the NEA Representative Assembly (RA), focuses the union’s resources on the battles ahead: The essential fight for public education and for working families.
Our opponents are wealthy and organized. Their efforts in the *Janus* case, which elicited a historic anti-union judgment from the Supreme Court this June, aim to weaken your voice as educators and workers. In these pages, CUNY’s Edward Volchok explains what’s at stake: your pay and benefits, of course, but also your tenure and academic freedom, your institution’s state and federal funding, and your students’ ability to pursue truth in your classrooms. “We must act. We are not helpless. We have a duty to resist,” he writes.

Organized resistance, led by faculty union members, standing alongside students and community members, also is prescribed and demonstrated in Susan Hegeman and Paul Ortiz’ excellent article, which describes the response to racist visitors at the University of Florida last year. “The union’s role here is simple: to stand up for its members and their values,” they write.

This issue also includes a short “best of” section, which includes articles published by the journal in recent years, that resonate today, such as Jeff Lustig’s award-winning “University Besieged,” which serves as a haunting love letter to the academy from a dying man, and Dave Iasevoli’s “A World of White and Snowy Scents: Teaching Whiteness,” an unfortunately still-relevant look at race and racism. Accompanying each article is introductory text by a member of the journal’s review panel.

The work ahead will be hard. Often it will be discouraging. But what you do, in colleges and universities across America, is so fundamental to democracy, to humanity, to truth, that we must persist. Said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García, quoting Luke Skywalker(!) at this year’s RA: “You don’t win by destroying what you hate. You win by saving what you love.”

Stand together. Save what you love.
Nazis on Campus: 
A Union and Community Responds

by Susan Hegeman and Paul Ortiz

In the fall of 2017, the University of Florida (UF) and the city of Gainesville were part of a coda to a terrible event in recent U.S. history: the violent torch-wielding rally of white supremacists and extreme far-right groups in the college town of Charlottesville, Virginia, that left three people dead and at least 33 injured. These events reminded the nation of the presence of organized and often violent racist extremism in the U.S.—and alerted us to its increasing normalization and possibly growing power. Indeed, a recent ABC News/Washington Post poll revealed that nearly 10 percent of Americans today “call it acceptable to hold Neo-Nazi or white supremacist views, equivalent to about 22 million Americans.”1

In this essay, we will draw on our experiences as members of the United Faculty of Florida (UFF)-University of Florida to discuss what unions in higher education can do to respond to domestic extremism, and why it’s more important than ever for union members to engage in labor-community coalitions.

SPENCER COMES TO TOWN

Our account begins on August 12—the day of the Charlottesville violence—when UF President Kent Fuchs alerted faculty, staff, and stu-
dents that Richard Spencer, a self-proclaimed “identitarian” and a ring-leader of the Charlottesville rally, had reserved an on-campus speaking venue at UF. The University of Florida is a racially and ethnically diverse campus where more than 40 percent of students identify as something other than white and approximately 20 percent are Jewish. It also is located in north-central Florida, in a part of the country that has a long history of white supremacy, Jim Crow, and racist violence. A wide coalition of groups, including our chapter of the statewide faculty union, quickly understood the threat that Spencer and his followers posed to student and employee safety, and mobilized to pressure UF administrators to cancel the event. For their part, Spencer’s group invoked their “free speech” rights and threatened to sue. He ultimately spoke on campus on October 19.

Instead of standing up to Spencer and paying for a legal battle, UF chose to turn part of campus into a militarized zone at an estimated expense of at least $600,000 to the university, plus millions more to the state and surrounding community. With Charlottesville likely in mind, Florida’s governor declared a state of emergency, and hundreds of police, sheriff’s deputies, and National Guard reservists from around the state traveled to Gainesville to create an armed, human barrier between Spencer’s followers and anti-racist protesters. Snipers patrolled rooftops, while police helicopters circled campus. Laboratories, museums, and one of the university hospital’s largest medical clinics closed their doors for the day. Parents pulled their students from campus days in advance of the event, and faculty canceled hundreds of classes. Many UF employees lost a day or more of wages due to the closures and disruptions.

On the day of the event, despite urgings from UF administrators and city officials to stay away from the speaking venue, thousands of students, faculty, and community members gathered outside to protest and chant.

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down Spencer and white supremacist hate, while audience members inside heckled, mocked, and drowned out his speech. Though the protests themselves were peaceful, there was violence that day when, after the event, a group of white supremacists confronted and shot at anti-racist protesters sitting at a bus shelter. Three of the attackers were arrested. One currently awaits trial on charges of attempted murder.

Much of the press coverage of Spencer’s speech at UF sought to minimize the sense of incipient menace to our community and to downplay the known dangers of violent racist extremism. Many reporters cast the entire event as nothing more than well-intentioned over-reaction by university administrators, Governor Rick Scott, and activists. By several accounts, our alarm appeared needless. Indeed, some coverage suggested the whole event was a win for Spencer, who garnered lots of free publicity and raised the significance of his movement by inciting disproportionate fear and disruption. In these narratives, the real heroes of the day were the hecklers in Spencer’s audience who put him and his “right-wing carnival act” in its place. What the media overlooked in these reports were the weeks of coalition building, anti-racist education, and movement organizing that ensured Gainesville would not be a replay of Charlottesville.

As activists and union leaders who helped organize the attempt to stop UF from permitting the Spencer event and also the protests of the event itself, we will, obviously, offer a very different account than the mainstream media. Richard Spencer is not a harmless political “carnival act.” His racist, white supremacist views are part of a worldwide movement that has ascended to quasi-legitimacy through the presidency of Donald Trump, who is widely understood as supportive of its ethno-nationalist views. Spencer’s appearance, alongside his violent followers on our campus, represented a direct physical threat to many UF students and employees,

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some of whom, in the wake of Trump’s election, had recently experienced racist intimidation on campus. Furthermore, it has become clear that Spencer’s cynical invocation of free speech rights is part of a larger far-right assault on higher education. Contrary to media reports, what happened here in Gainesville was not at all a victory for Spencer or his racist cause, as it showed that his message—and the potential violence posed by his entourage—could be peacefully refuted and resisted through superior organization and community mobilization. It is especially gratifying to us that other universities have cited the events in Gainesville to justifiably deny Spencer’s requests to rent space on their campuses.8

**In taking up and addressing these concerns, we believe we did the right thing—not only as concerned colleagues and activists, but as unionists.**

Beyond presenting our perspective of the events, we wish to offer some lessons from our experience that we hope will be useful to colleagues who find themselves in similar circumstances as Spencer continues what he calls his “danger tour” of universities.9 The first lesson is this: we learned early in the process that the university is centrally concerned with protecting the institution—not its students or employees. Second, we recognized that if university administrators won’t directly address a situation that creates real and reasonable fear and anger among members of the university community, it is incumbent upon union members to do so. In taking up and addressing these concerns, we believe we did the right thing—not only as concerned colleagues and activists, but as unionists. In some part, our efforts last fall amounted to a matter of contract enforcement, as the legally binding, collectively negotiated agreement between UFF-UF and the university enjoins the university to provide a safe and non-discriminatory working environment. By organizing around this issue, UFF-UF members helped to develop the kind of goodwill and support that is crucial in right-to-work environments such as ours. Finally, our potentially most controversial

**WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT ‘FREE SPEECH’ ON CAMPUS**

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point: this situation presented a classic case of a conflict between two things we value and wish to protect, freedom of speech and community safety. As the situation regarding Spencer’s event evolved, our position on how to balance our concern for these values also changed. As a matter of strategy, we believe that we were right, at different times, to fight to protect both.

In the wake of Charlottesville, national contempt for Spencer and his movement soared. Nevertheless, in the lead up to his speech at UF, Spencer knew several things were working in his favor. His main goal, of course, was to promote himself as the cleaned-up leader of an increasingly powerful movement. But, even a forceful show of resistance to him and his followers could be used to garner press attention, and to make the movement seem politically significant. Additionally, any protest or opposition to his appearance could serve the broader political interests of those who seek to undermine higher education in the U.S. and public education in general.

Since the 1960s, campus free speech has migrated from being an issue on the liberal left to being a hot-button topic for the far right. For decades, anti-intellectuals have pushed a narrative of universities as hotbeds of liberal indoctrination and political intolerance, rather than havens of free inquiry. This argument has been used as a pretext to defund public higher education and to attack whole programs, as well as individual professors and students. As recently as last fall, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions complained in a speech at Georgetown University that “freedom of thought and speech on the American campus are under attack,” and that universities are becoming “echo chamber[s] of political correctness and homogenous thought, a shelter for fragile egos.” Recently, the libertarian Goldwater Institute has promoted model legislation aimed at addressing this putative attack on freedom of thought, versions of which
have been put forward in several state legislatures, including Florida’s.\textsuperscript{12} It would outlaw campus “free speech zones,” prevent schools from blocking controversial speakers such as Spencer, and impose civil penalties on those found to be restricting free speech on campus.

From our experience, such legislation to protect controversial campus speakers is hardly necessary. As we learned, the general consensus of legal experts is that settled First Amendment case law largely supported Spencer’s request for a venue at UF.\textsuperscript{13} It is no accident that his “danger tour” of college campuses has explicitly targeted large public universities, including the University of Michigan, Michigan State, Auburn, Texas A & M, University of Cincinnati, Ohio State University, Penn State, and Louisiana State University, in addition to UF. Unlike some speakers whose campus appearances have led to controversy, such as Milo Yiannopoulos’ and Ann Coulter’s appearances at the University of California, Berkeley, Spencer is not typically sponsored by anyone affiliated with the university.\textsuperscript{14} Nevertheless, public universities are state actors who must abide by the First Amendment, and therefore must honor his request to rent a venue as they would any group’s request, regardless of the renter’s viewpoint. Even if the renter—or those protesting him—poses a credible threat of violence, the legal bar for preventing their presence on campus is very high. When Auburn University canceled Spencer’s speaking event in spring 2017, citing “legitimate concerns and credible evidence that it will jeopardize the safety of students, faculty, staff and visitors,” Spencer’s representatives immediately sued, and a federal judge required Auburn to allow Spencer’s event to go forward.\textsuperscript{15} When other universities, including Ohio State, Penn State, Michigan State, and LSU, denied Spencer a speaking venue, more lawsuits followed.

The ironies of Spencer posing as a champion of free speech rights should not be overlooked. As a wealthy white man, whose organization,
the National Policy Institute, was founded and funded by other wealthy individuals, Spencer has the resources to ensure access to free speech that many without his wealth or privilege lack. His ready use of the courts is proof of that. Even as Spencer makes common cause with libertarians and First Amendment absolutists in his legal pleas for his rights to speech on campus, his stated goals are explicitly to deny rights—including First Amendment rights—to others. An avowed racist and anti-Semite, he is a proponent of what he calls “peaceful ethnic cleansing.” He has said, “Our dream is a new society, an ethno-state that would be a gathering point for all Europeans. It would be a new society based on very different ideals than, say, the Declaration of Independence.” His invocation of free speech protections is parasitic on laws and norms he would gladly brush aside for others. Moreover, his charade of presenting his hateful ideas as a kind of pseudo-academic lecture makes a mockery of the concept of academic freedom, which entails the freedom to pursue and disseminate knowledge, not the free expression of unsupportable political views.

**Spencer’s charade of presenting his hateful ideas as a kind of pseudo-academic lecture makes a mockery of the concept of academic freedom.**

**A MISHMASH OF MESSAGES FROM THE UNIVERSITY**

The legal situation in Florida was different than Auburn’s, in that, on the heels of Charlottesville, there was a more clear-cut case to be made for the potential danger around Spencer’s event. Anxiety on campus and in the community was heightened, to say the least. Countless parents, alumni, employees, and local community members—on campus and off—phoned, e-mailed, and otherwise contacted university officials to urge them to deny Spencer a venue. At the urging of members, UFF-UF also issued a statement. Reiterating the manifest reasons that we might be concerned for our safety, we reminded the UF administration that our collective bargaining agreement requires the Board of Trustees and administration
to “Protect faculty from attacks on our academic freedom; Protect faculty from those who wish to discriminate against us; and ensure at all times a safe working environment.” A few days after Fuchs announced the Spencer event, the university then cancelled it, citing Charlottesville and specific, recent threats to our community. Spencer’s organization responded with the expected lawsuit, and the university scrambled, reversing course again. One member of the UF legal team stated, “it was never the intention of the university to permanently bar Mr. Spencer from speaking at an appropriate time and location.”

The university’s goals for the event were confused. They wanted both freedom of speech for a speaker who attracted dangerous, violent, racist followers and community safety.

but contempt for him and his hateful views. But the university’s goals for the event were themselves confused. They sought to defend against the conservative talking point that universities are hostile to free speech and to prevent a dangerous disaster like Charlottesville. They wanted both freedom of speech for a speaker who attracted dangerous, violent, racist followers and community safety.

Predictably, this led to a confusing mishmash of signals from the administration that left many UF community members even more perplexed and worried. Spencer is a violent racist whose views most everyone disavows; Spencer is not really dangerous. UF will be business-as-usual; stay away for your own safety. President Fuchs urged students “to avoid the Spencer event,” but also to “not let Mr. Spencer’s message of hate and racism go unchallenged.” Instead of protesting, students were urged to attend, from the safety of their homes or dorms, an online virtual assembly titled “#TogetherUF,” at which, it was hoped, famous alumni like the football star Tim Tebow would offer messages of “unity, togetherness,
Gator Nation, etc.” (Tebow declined to participate). While UF administrators officially cancelled classes near the venue, they informed faculty that they could use their discretion to cancel additional classes, if they wished. Many students simply planned to leave town. Many university employees also had concerns for their safety; some were explicitly told by their supervisors to stay home, and some hourly employees lost wages as a result.

LESSONS FROM THE UNION’S PLAYBOOK

Our union chapter, UFF-UF, joined forces with the UF chapter of Graduate Assistants United (UFF-GAU), which represents UF’s graduate students, to continue to push for cancellation on the grounds of worker and student safety. Our thinking, in part, was that if the university was at all considering cancellation, then we could help provide them with more points for a rationale. Faculty affiliated with the union also promoted digital and paper petitions and letter-writing campaigns. Some union members, using their expertise as scholars to address issues such as the history of racism, white supremacy, and the Holocaust, contributed op-eds to local newspapers and participated in public fora and teach-ins. We began working with a broad array of area activists and organizations, including members of the Alachua County NAACP, Veterans for Peace, National Women’s Liberation, the Gainesville Anti-Fascist Committee, and the Alachua County Labor Coalition, among others.

Meanwhile, we supported the activist students who created and led “No Nazis at UF,” a grassroots organization composed of working class and first-generation college students who worked tirelessly to educate, mobilize, and organize a broad base of on- and off-campus individuals and groups. They used an expansive message of radical inclusivity and anti-racism, welcoming all who opposed Spencer’s ideology of white
supremacy and ethnic cleansing. No Nazis at UF’s big-tent organizing strategy enabled a diverse coalition that ranged from members of the Industrial Workers of the World to local Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities. Their efforts included an anti-Spencer petition drive, as well as news conferences, community rallies, and a march to UF’s main administration building in an effort to engage administrators. Ironically, a campus leadership that is supposed to uphold the ideals of dialogue and freedom of speech refused to engage with student organizers; Tigert Hall, the central administration building, was in lock-down mode for the entire week.

As it became clear that university administrators would not cancel Spencer’s appearance and that he and his followers were coming to Gainesville, the union, together with student and community activists, shifted tactics. We turned toward the protest and the exercise of our First Amendment rights. Shortly before the planned event, No Nazis at UF invited UFF-UF members to participate in an event titled “Community Teach-In Led by Professors,” where the primary goal was to think about how to put the histories of anti-racism and anti-fascism into practice. (Thought and Action!) An African American staff member gave eloquent testimony about harassment of black faculty and staff on campus in the preceding months—incidents that faculty felt had not been addressed satisfactorily by the administration. Students, staff, and Gainesville neighbors shared their strategies to address the immediacy of the Spencer speech. However, all of the attendees agreed on the need to formulate long-term strategies to address economic and racial inequality in Gainesville, which has one of the highest rates of inequality in the nation. Suggestions included staff salary raises, new ethnic studies programs and Holocaust education, and a stronger commitment by the university to support living wage initiatives. As educators who work with union and social justice organizing, UFF-UF members were well posi-
tioned to participate in this dialogue. One could judge the success of the event by the scores of well-organized students who walked directly from the teach-in to the UF Student Senate meeting to demand that student leaders call on the administration to cancel the Spencer event.

THE EVENTS OF OCTOBER 19 AND BEYOND

By providing Spencer with a venue, the university also was required to prevent protesters from silencing him via the exercise of a “heckler’s veto.” Thus, they chose a date, time and place—a large auditorium on the periphery of campus, at midday on a Thursday—that would minimize attendance at the speech and at any protests or rallies. When it came to light that a Gainesville brewery was offering free beers to anyone who turned in a ticket to the speech, the university conceded to Spencer’s group the unusual right to handle ticket distribution on their own. As predicted, Spencer’s assistants cherry-picked potential attendees, refusing to admit those who carried signs or wore t-shirts that indicated opposition to Spencer.

It became clear that, in addition to upholding the free speech rights of a man whose views they openly and repeatedly disavowed, the university would minimize free speech opportunities for those with whom they presumably agreed. The massive security operation focused on separating event attendees from protesters. But it also worked to make protesting as difficult as possible. Whole sections of campus, including parking facilities around the venue, were closed, bikes were banned, and public transportation was re-routed. It was very difficult to even get to the protests. Bags and water bottles (no small thing in subtropical Florida) also were banned.

Nevertheless, thousands turned out for a peaceful protest that demonstrated community solidarity against hate groups and with those who felt endangered by Spencer and his supporters. Students and com-
community members organized carpools, wellness stations to keep protesters hydrated, and communication hubs to monitor and alert people about neo-Nazi efforts to engage in hooliganism. Individuals who were denied the opportunity to protest due to the failure of the university to provide access for people with disabilities—one student near the Phillips Center had his crutches confiscated by overzealous police—continued calling and petitioning the administration to cancel right up to the moment that Spencer took the speaker’s podium. It is highly probable that the large turnout (estimated by organizers at approximately 3,000 people) scared away many of the neo-Nazis who had planned for weeks to descend on Gainesville en masse.

In conclusion, Richard Spencer’s speaking tour is part of a well-funded effort to spread a hateful ideology. Its intent, at the very least, is to drain the coffers of public universities, even while it deceptively portrays universities as working against free speech, one of the central tenets of our democracy. Universities will, all too often, attempt to avoid controversy by allowing this hateful provocateur’s request for a venue to go unchallenged, and in the process restrict the free speech of the very people who wish to register their dissent. The union’s role here is simple: to stand up for its members and their values, and to argue against this potentially violent provocation, using the tools at hand, including our contract. We were successful in spreading the message that Spencer’s presence was a needless danger to our community. And while we didn’t stop his appearance, we were seen as standing up for our members, our students, and our community’s well-being. In a time when too many leaders abrogate their responsibilities to ensure a safe working environment, free of discrimination, the time-tested tools of community and labor organizing have proven to be the best ones we have to preserve and promote the dignity of all people.
ENDNOTES

1. Langer, “1 in 10 say it’s acceptable to hold neo-Nazi views.” The Southern Poverty Law Center’s “Hatewatch” research project notes that incidents of racist violence have increased markedly during the first year of the Trump administration. See Janik, “Alt-America Reveals Forces That Revived the Radical Right.” The Anti-Defamation League’s recent report on right-wing terrorist incidents in the U.S. in the past 25 years finds that “right-wing extremists have been one of the largest and most constant sources of domestic terror incidents for many years.” Nearly half of the 150 incidents they document were perpetrated by those espousing white supremacist ideology. See also the Anti-Defamation League’s “A Dark and Constant Rage: 25 Years of Right-Wing Terrorism in the United States.”

2. For an overview of the history of white supremacy in Florida, see Ortiz, Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing in Florida from Reconstruction to the Blood Election of 1920; and Winsboro, Old South, New South, or Down South? Florida and the Modern Civil Rights Movement.

3. The total cost is nearly impossible to calculate, given the disruption to research, teaching, and much more. However, in terms of security alone, UF President Fuchs said costs incurred by non-UF law enforcement agencies exceeded $3 million. The university has publicly estimated its security costs at more than $600,000. Kornfield, “UF Gets Spencer Fees Back, Meets with County About Bill.” Meanwhile, UF reported that Spencer paid about $10,500 to the rent the space. See, Caplan.


5. See Moser, “Richard Spencer Wins Again.”


7. Among other incidents, the building sign for African American Studies was vandalized repeatedly, and faculty and staff subjected to racist harassment in their own offices. Ellenbogen, “Man Trespassed from UF After Confronting Black Faculty Members.”


13. For summaries of legal cases and principles, see ACLU, “Speech on Campus”; and Cohen, “Exploring Free Speech on Campuses.”

14. For an interesting debate on the legal aspects of campus free speech related to the Berkeley events, see Chemerinsky, “Hate Speech is Protected Free Speech, Even on College Campuses”; and Post, “There is no 1st Amendment Right to Speak on a College Campus.”


17. Kirn, “UFF-UF and GAU-UF Urge Cancellation of White Supremacist Speaker at UF,”


20. Fuchs, “Personal Message from President Fuchs.” The web site for #TogetherUF may be found at: http://news.ufl.edu/articles/2017/10/togetheruf-campaign-to-hold-virtual-assembly.php


22. United Faculty of Florida is part of a coalition of labor groups working to restore lost wages due to this event and to Hurricane Irma, which shut down the UF campus for six days in fall 2017.

23. The union also explored the option of filing a grievance on the grounds that the university had failed to provide safe working conditions. But there was no strong consensus about the viability of such a grievance or about what kinds of remedies to propose.

24. One such digital petition that we circulated via e-mail is here: actionnetwork.org/forms/tell-university-of-florida-president-and-trustees-do-not-host-richard-spencer-on-our-campus

25. For examples, see Abend-David, “Propagating Nazi Ideology is not Free Speech;” Schueller, “Richard Spencer’s Visit is not Required by the First Amendment;” Goda, “Universities Must Challenge Richard Spencer’s ‘Right’ to Incite a Race War in America.”


27. Widespread agreement on this topic includes the University of Florida, which has partnered with the local community to research and address racial disparities. See University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research, “Understanding Racial Inequity in Alachua County.”

28. ACLU, “Speech on Campus.”

29. Rozsa and Svrluga, “A White Nationalist is Coming to Campus. Florida Prepares as though for a Disaster.”

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Sticking to the Union: The War on Organized Faculty and How We Can Resist

by Edward Volchok

Right-to-work (RTW) is the doublespeak George Orwell warned of in his comment that some political language “is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.”

On the surface, the phrase suggests an admirable, even compassionate effort—what American would be against the rights of his or her fellow human beings to work? However, in Orwellian fashion—“War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength.”—the term “right-to-work” obfuscates the intent. RTW laws neither provide opportunity for gainful employment nor a higher standard of living. In truth, by ending a union’s ability to charge administrative fees to employees who benefit from their collectively bargained contract, these laws aim to weaken unions and silence workers. They are designed to help employers, not workers.

On June 27, 2018, with its long anticipated 5 to 4 decision in Janus v. AFSCME, the Supreme Court has made RTW the law of the land. In this article, I review the decades of well-funded, anti-union RTW activism that led to this decision. My focus will be on public-sector unions, in general, and faculty and staff unions in particular. I show that RTW is part of a movement to weaken unions, abolish collective bargaining in the

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public sector, privatize higher education, eliminate faculty tenure, and curtail academic freedom. To close, I will discuss how faculty union leaders and rank-and-file members can—and must—resist for the sake of our students, our universities, our communities, and ourselves.

THE ZOMBIE THAT WILL NOT DIE

State legislatures have been able to pass RTW laws since Congress enacted the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947. This act amended the landmark National Labor Relations Act, which permitted collective bargaining between an employer and a labor organization, and enabled unions to require all workers covered by their collectively bargained contract to pay the costs of representation. These are called union security agreements, and the fees are known as fair-share or agency fees. With Taft-Hartley, federal lawmakers created an option for anti-union states: They could prohibit union security agreements. By 1948, 12 states had done so: Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. In the 1950s, Nevada, Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, Utah, and Kansas followed, and then Wyoming in 1963, Louisiana in 1976, and Idaho in 1985.

For two decades, the number of RTW states stood at 21. But recent years have brought renewed vigor to anti-union efforts... But who really wins when RTW becomes law?

For two decades, the number of RTW states stood at 21. But recent years have brought renewed vigor to anti-union efforts. Between 1999 and 2017, the National Right to Work Committee alone spent nearly $43 million to lobby Congress. It also has spent money to lobby state legislators on behalf of state RTW laws and claims, on its website, to “have often had a tremendous impact,” including “helping Oklahoma to become the 22nd RTW state” in 2001, and “lead[ing] Indiana to become the 23rd” in 2012.

But who really wins when RTW becomes law? The National Right to Work Committee proclaims, “Right to Work states enjoy a higher
standard of living than do non-Right to Work states. Families in Right to Work states, on average, have greater after-tax income and purchasing power than do those families living in non-Right to Work states....” Meanwhile, evidence supporting this argument is unspecific at best and untrue at worst. According to a study by the non-partisan, non-profit Economic Policy Institute that controlled for 42 variables, RTW laws are associated with lower wages and also with jobs less likely to provide health insurance and pensions. Another Economic Policy Institute study shows that wages in RTW states are 3.1 percent lower than in non-RTW states. This translates to a $1,558 annual penalty for workers in RTW states.

The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017 data on union membership buttress the contention that non-union workers earn less than union members. The median weekly earnings for non-union workers was 80 percent that of union members ($829 compared to $1,024). For education, training, and library occupations, non-union workers’ median weekly earnings were only 78 percent that of union members ($900 compared to $1,157). These differences reflect the advantage of collective bargaining agreements as well as variations in the distribution of union and non-union workers by industry, occupation, and region. These data are based on monthly surveys conducted by the U. S. Census Bureau from a scientifically selected sample of 60,000 eligible households.

Among full-time faculty specifically, those working at public two-year and four-year institutions in non-RTW states have significantly higher salaries than those in RTW states, according to the 2018 “Special Salary Issue” of the NEA Higher Education Advocate. Full-time faculty at four-year public institutions in non-RTW states earn $8,029 more per 9- to 10-month contract than their colleagues in RTW states. The difference is even greater among public two-year institutions. Faculty in non-RTW states earn $9,538 more per 9- to 10-month contract. Not only are these differences statistically significant, these salary discrepancies make a
huge practical difference in the lives of faculty.\textsuperscript{12} I am sure that my colleagues teaching at public two-year and four-year institutions in RTW states would find an additional $8,000 or $9,500 per academic year to be a major improvement in their standard of living.\textsuperscript{13}

Not surprisingly, RTW laws have broad effects with respect to other measures. Journalist Janice Gavin, citing U.S. Census data, reports that RTW states have higher poverty rates than non-RTW states: 15.3 percent versus 12.8 percent.\textsuperscript{14} Additionally, in terms of GDP per capita, poverty rates, percentage of residents with health insurance, and life expectancy, RTW states perform significantly worse than “worker friendly” states, Professor Darrell Minor found.\textsuperscript{15} Meanwhile, Tamara Kay, a sociologist at University of Notre Dame, writes that pro-RTW studies are poorly controlled and fail to account for confounding variables. She writes that the evidence that RTW laws attract business into the state is merely anecdotal.\textsuperscript{16}

Nevertheless, in recent years the RTW movement has gained momentum across the U.S., ushered into law by Republican governors and legislatures. Along with Indiana, Michigan enacted RTW in 2012 and Wisconsin in 2015. The impact is clear. In Wisconsin, which also passed an anti-collective bargaining law, the number of union members in the states dropped 40 percent in 2016.\textsuperscript{17} Union membership also declined in Michigan—and average wages have suffered, according to a 2017 Illinois Economic Policy Institute study.\textsuperscript{18} Yet in 2016 and 2017, these states were joined by Kentucky, West Virginia, and Missouri, where Republicans control all branches of state government, bringing the number of RTW states at the time of the Janus decision to 28. (In Missouri, union members forced suspension of the state’s RTW law until a state voter referendum could be held this November.\textsuperscript{19} This action is a noteworthy example of collective resistance, but the Court’s decision in Janus supersedes it.)
In 2017, New Hampshire almost brought the total to 29. Its state legislature rejected a RTW bill on a 200 to 177 vote with 32 Republicans joining Democrats. Ohio and Colorado also recently entertained legislation. Other states have gone even further in their anti-union efforts. Wisconsin, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Texas have forbidden collective bargaining for public sector employees. It appears that South Dakota would like to do the same: In 2017, the South Dakota House of Representatives passed legislation ending collective bargaining for the state’s four technical colleges and there was an effort to end it for the state’s six public universities, too. The bill passed the House but died in the Senate thanks to a coalition of Democrats and college-town Republicans. Meanwhile, this year in Florida, Gov. Rick Scott (R) signed a law that requires unions to sign 50 percent of eligible teachers as dues-paying union members, or risk being decertified.

A January 2018 study shows the political benefits Republican have reaped from RTW laws. The share of Democratic Presidential votes falls by 3.5 percent, as does the share for U.S. Senate.

**THREE SUPREME COURT CASES: ABOOD, FRIEDRICH S, AND JANU S**

In 2015, when the Supreme Court agreed to hear Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association, it was assumed the Court’s conservative majority would overturn its 1977 decision in Ab ood v. Detroit Board of
Education, which held that public-sector employees could be required to pay agency fees for collective bargaining and contract administration, but not to fund a union’s political or ideological activities. The sudden death of conservative Justice Antonin Scalia upturned those assumptions, leaving the Court split 4 to 4 on Friedrichs and, thus, Abood unchanged. But in 2018, one of President Donald Trump’s first executive actions was to appoint Neil M. Gorsuch to the Court and ensure its 5 to 4 conservative majority. Again, it was assumed—this time rightly—that the Court would take the opportunity presented in Janus v. AFSCME to overturn Abood, rule agency fees unconstitutional, and make RTW the law of the land. For public sector unions, with 34.4 percent of all workers union members, Janus was the most important case on the Court’s 2018 docket.

With the Court’s recent ruling, individual workers are now free not to join the union or pay any union fees.

The Janus case originated in partisan politics. In 2015, Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner, a Republican, ordered the state to stop collecting agency fees from non-union state workers. He also filed a lawsuit asking a federal circuit court to affirm his order. Illinois Attorney General and Democrat, Lisa Madigan, countersued along with several unions, arguing that Rauner lacked standing because he does not pay union fees. With the governor’s case on shaky ground, the Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation and the Liberty Justice Center found three state workers with standing, including Mark Janus. Writing in support of the plaintiff in the Friedrichs case, Janus declared, “The union vote is not my voice. The union’s fight is not my fight.”

In March 2016, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against Mr. Janus. The plaintiffs appealed to the Supreme Court, which accepted their writ of certiorari.

The plaintiffs rooted their argument in the First Amendment: Public employee unions are inherently political because they negotiate with state and local governments. Forcing non-union employees to pay fees to a
union is compelled speech, they contend, which the U.S. Constitution prohibits.  

Writing for the majority, Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. argues that *Abood* was “poorly reasoned” and violates the First Amendment rights of non-members. In effect the Court agrees with the petitioner’s argument that “nonmember fee deductions [agency fees] are coerced political speech.” In addition, Justice Alito dismisses the issue of “free-riders” as not a compelling interest. Citing *Knox*, 567 U.S., at 311, he writes, “free-rider arguments…are generally insufficient to overcome First Amendment objections.”

Justice Elena Kagan, joined by Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, and Sonia Sotomayor, wrote a scathing dissent that accused the majority of judicial activism and weaponizing the First Amendment. “Rarely if ever has the Court overruled a decision—let alone one of this import—with so little regard for the usual principles of *stare decisis,*” declares Kagan. (*Stare decisis* is the legal principle of deferring to earlier court rulings). The Janus decision over-reaches, she writes, because it overturns a decision entrenched in the nation’s laws, and turns the First Amendment into “…a sword, and using it against workaday economic and regulatory policy.” Justice Kagan concludes her dissent by arguing, “…at every stop black-robed rulers overriding citizens’ choices. The First Amendment was meant for better things.”

With that, the Court has opened the door to a cascade of possible effects that could sap a union’s strength at the collective bargaining table—and in legislatures, where membership means power. Dues-paying union members might question why they pay for the same benefits non-members get for free. Unions, after all, are obliged to represent all workers. In response, some union members may decide to quit the union too. Recently,
Education Week reported that the National Education Association (NEA) anticipates that as many as 10 percent of its members may choose to stop paying, prompting NEA’s Representative Assembly in July to approve $50 million in budget cuts. This is likely a pragmatic decision.

At the state level, RTW has been shown to depress union membership numbers. From 2015 to 2016, even as union membership increased in non-RTW states, it fell in RTW states, according to a 2017 report from the Illinois Economic Policy Institute. Of the then-26 RTW states, 20 saw their union membership shrink. At the national level, a decline in union membership may be likely—but it is not inevitable.

Anti-union legislation passed in Wisconsin, including the state’s anti-collective bargaining Act 10 and RTW law, resulted in halving membership in the state’s American Federation of Teachers. Obviously, this does not bode well for unions.

According to Dr. Barbara Bowen, president of the Professional Staff Congress, which represents more than 27,000 faculty and staff at the City University of New York, “such a precipitous decline in membership is devastating. If you lose 50 percent,” she continued, “you lose 50 percent of your moral force when you go to the state capital and ask for funding.”

The first thing they are going to say is, ‘Well, 50 percent of the people who work there don’t even want to be in your union.’ Then, of course, there is a disruptive financial impact. “A 50 percent drop means 50 percent less income,” Bowen observes. “You are 50 percent less able to hire a lawyer to defend members, print signs for a demonstration, or hire a bus to go to the state capital.”

THE CHANGING AMERICAN WORKPLACE

The American workplace is changing radically. As well-paid jobs that sustained the middle class become scarce, as we transform into a nation of contractors and contingent employees, it is essential to protect the
rights of unions to exist. How will the nation’s growing workforce of freelancers—53 million in 2015 and projected to reach 60 million by the end of this decade—pay for healthcare and decent housing, survive during gaps in employment, and save for retirement? Student debt has also become an important concern. The Chicago Sun-Times, citing the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, reports that over 44 million Americans carry more than $1.4 trillion in student debt in contrast to only $640 billion in 2008. U.S. News & World Reports notes that a student who earns a bachelor’s degree takes as long as 21 years to pay off his or her debt. CNBC, citing data from the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, reports, “6.8 million student loan borrowers between the ages of 40 and 49 and that together, these graduates hold a collective $229.6 billion in debt. That means that Americans in their 40s with student loan debt each have an average balance of $33,765.” Due to the heavy obligation of student loads, NerdWallet projected that someone who graduated college in 2015, will not be able to retire until the age of 75. Yes, an education lasts a lifetime, but apparently so does the financial impact of servicing student loans.

Without an organized response to these disturbing workplace trends, all workers may see the advances won by the American labor movement wither away: Fair working conditions with decent pay, a reasonable pension for a dignified old age, and health insurance.

A FACULTY UNION INTEGRATED WITH ITS SURROUNDING COMMUNITY

CUNY has always been the vehicle for New York City’s poor, minorities, and women to get the education needed for careers that provide upward mobility for themselves and their families. As such, Bowen says, the university is an integral part of the “imagination of New York City.”
At the heart of this democratic mission is the union, PSC-CUNY, which has been a strong voice in supporting students and demanding that CUNY provide quality education to the city’s diverse communities. “[As a result of the union’s continual] insistence on more investment in CUNY, we have helped invest in the people of New York,” Bowen reports.

As of 2015, there were approximately 278,000-degree credit students at CUNY. The majority of undergraduates—57 percent—were female. The average age of an undergraduate student is 24, although about a quarter are 25 or older. Approximately three-quarters of undergraduates are people of ethnic or racial minority groups: 23.2 percent are Asian, 24.8 percent are Black, 25.6 percent are Hispanic, and 0.3 percent are American Indian/Alaskan Native. Just over 35 percent were born outside the United States. They speak 168 languages with 40.9 percent having a native language other than English.

CUNY undergraduates tend to be poor; 23.3 percent have household incomes under $20,000; 30.3 percent work for pay more than 20 hours a week; 53.3 percent are Pell Grant recipients; and 38.1 percent are the first in their family to go to college.

The experience of one student affects his or her entire family. “Being in college is not just for our students,” Bowen says, “it is for their whole family…the family that hopes to get out of poverty…. [Being in college] is a family enterprise.” By helping students climb the economic ladder, CUNY has contributed to the economic vitality of New York City.

The university’s union has been a major force behind students’ ability to achieve their academic and personal goals. It was PSC-CUNY, along with the State University of New York’s United University Professors union, that vigorously campaigned for the 2017 Enhance Maintenance of Effort bill that provided funds to cover inflationary increases to the operating costs of New York’s public universities. From 2008 to 2016, the
non-partisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities writes that New York’s spending per student at public colleges, adjusted for inflation, was down 6.4 percent. Bowen argues, “one of the real hallmarks of our contracts has been that we have found ways to create non-austerity conditions [during this period].” The union, of course, has always been a force pushing for greater financial support for student services. Doing so, Bowen contends, “profoundly affects the lives of students.”

The union’s effort for more funding naturally helps students, but it also is important for nurturing local economies. A study from the Milken Institute, in which researchers found a “strong relationship between education and a region’s economic performance,” underscores this point. “The better educated the worker,” the authors argue, “the greater the benefit of additional schooling to both the worker and the region. Add one year of college to a region’s workforce, for instance, and the GDP per capita jumps 17.4 percent.”

Asked what CUNY would be like without a faculty union, Bowen says, “Pretty soon our faculty would be composed of 85 to 95 percent adjuncts because of the pressure to save money. We would have a system with a few highly paid academic stars… and an unlimited number of courses taught by non-tenured [track] people.” Adjunct and non-tenured instructors lack job security. Without job security, academic freedom quickly evaporates, as contingent instructors have less protection to voice unpopular ideas. In addition, adjuncts are so poorly paid that many must take second and third jobs to make ends meet. Consequently, they often lack the time to mentor students. Many researchers, including the Delphi Institute’s Adrianna Kezar whose work appeared in this journal in 2014, have pointed to the harmful effects of these working conditions on all students in general and in particular students of color, poor students, and students who are the first in their families to go to college.
Eviscerating faculty unions is a way to destroy academic freedom that is being implemented across the nation. RTW laws that weaken faculty unions are merely the first step. The second step: dilute tenure. And, with that, dilute the traditional protections that maintain integrity in research. This happened in Wisconsin, where the University of Wisconsin spent $9 million to keep infuriated faculty from walking away last year.61 In Missouri, proposed legislation would eliminate tenure for newly hired faculty at public institutions starting in 2018. In Iowa, the proposed measure would remove tenure for faculty who have already earned it. Of these bills, Hans-Joerg Tiede, a senior program officer at the American Association of University Professors, said, “These are serious attempts to undermine universities and the role of universities in society.”62 Fortunately, neither bill is likely to become law. In Missouri, no hearings on this bill are scheduled. Meanwhile, the effort in Iowa failed due to the vigorous opposition of the Board of Regents and university administrators, who feared that this legislation would hamper the ability of the state to attract and retain quality faculty.63

WHAT ELSE DO FACULTY UNIONS DO?

Faculty unions negotiate for professional development and paid sabbaticals, multi-year job-security contracts for adjunct instructors, and reduced teaching loads that allow full-time faculty to spend more time working with individual students.64 These initiatives enhance the academic lives of students. Unions also can blunt the effects of privatization in higher education, which is essentially a movement away from public financing to private financing for public universities.65 Unions push administrators to convert contingent faculty positions to tenure-track positions. They protest attempts to outsource staff positions, and they insist that faculty, not outside contractors, control the curriculum.
HOW DO WE RESIST?

How can union leaders and rank-and-file members seize the initiative? Bowen says emphatically, “The first critical act of resistance a union member can take in the face of the... Janus decision is to sign the pledge to remain a member of the union.”66 And, the second act of resistance? Not surprisingly, Bowen urges union members to talk to wavering colleagues about what is at stake and convince them to stay in the union. This might sound like Marketing 101, but every organization, whether it sells corn flakes, life insurance, or labor representation, must periodically reexamine its value proposition, strategies, and tactics. Janus is a monumental event. Rebranding our unions will be necessary. We will have to figure out new ways to convince current and potential members to join our ranks—even when they are not required to do so. As Joshua Pechthalt, president of the California Federation of Teachers, says, “Frankly, we’re going to have to do the kind of organizing that we should have been doing all these many years. I think the labor movement got a little bit complacent.”67 Whether we call it “rebranding” or “organizing,” complacency must end.

With agency fees banned, unions now must grapple with the thorny issue of freeloading non-payers. We should take Mr. Janus’ words to heart. If the union’s fight is not his fight, then turnabout is fair play. Non-members should not get for free the same benefits dues-paying union members receive. Unions should push for state or federal legislation that would allow non-members with grievances covered under collective bargaining agreements to either pay for union representation or hire their own attorneys.

Members of the rank-and-file must resist as well. As Randi Weingarten recently noted, “The days of passive resignation are over.”68 We have seen active resistance this winter and spring with a wave of wild-

“The first critical act of resistance a union member can take in the face of the... Janus decision is to sign the pledge to remain a member of the union.” The second? Talk to wavering colleagues.
cat strikes in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona, and Colorado. We have even seen the rank-and-file overrule union leadership. While these strikes did not achieve all the organizers’ objectives, they showed the power of well-organized collective action. We need to do more. In addition to these labor actions and participating in mass demonstrations and civil disobedience, we should take the advice from Amanda Litman’s book, *Don’t Just March, Run for Something*. The lesson from the 2017 elections is that well-organized and committed newcomers can take seats from entrenched conservatives. Teachers and union members should give serious consideration to running for public office. Many have already heard the call. As Moriah Balingit reports in the *Washington Post*, “From Maine to Hawaii, about 170 teachers, former teachers, and other school workers...are running for seats in state legislatures, according to tallies by teacher unions and the Badass Teachers Association....”

Union members must increase voter turnout and fight against gerrymandering, the manipulation of electoral districts for partisan advantage. As practiced by Republicans, gerrymandering helps conservative, anti-union politicians stay in power. In the aftermath of President Obama’s historic election in 2008, conservative strategist Karl Rove, among others, helped the Republican Party implement the REdistricting MAjority Project (REDMAP). Ten years later, Rove’s plan is still working. It is why, in 2014, Republican candidates won 57 percent of U.S. House seats while receiving only 52 percent of votes. In 2017, the impact of state gerrymandering was seen in the race for the 100-seat House of Delegates in Virginia. Democrats received nearly 53.5 percent of the 2.4 million votes cast, over 210,000 more votes than Republicans. But Democrats will not control 53 or 54 seats. At the end of the year, with one tied race being decided by lot, Republicans retained control of the House of Delegates.
with a 51-to-49 majority. A grassroots group in Michigan, called Voters Not Politicians, shows one way to fight. It submitted 425,000 signatures to place a constitutional amendment on Michigan’s November ballot, which would change how the state’s legislative districts are drawn. This is an important act of resistance.

Union members also must address voter identification laws. These laws have been shown to diminish the voting rights of minorities, while doing little to deter voting among those who typically vote Republican. Meanwhile, election officials are purging legitimate but infrequent voters from voting rolls. This effort has been especially aggressive in Ohio, a key state in the 2018 race to control the Senate. According to Reuters, “…voters have been struck from the rolls in Democratic-leaning neighborhoods at roughly twice the rate as in Republican neighborhoods…and neighborhoods that have a high proportion of poor, African-American residents are hit hardest.” The proliferation of voter identification laws underscores the need for robust get-out-the-vote campaigns for all elections and a push to abolish these unnecessary, expensive, and intrusive voter identification laws.

On June 11, 2018, in another 5 to 4 decision, the Supreme Court ruled in Husted, Ohio Secretary of State v. A. Philip Randolph Institute et al. that the process Ohio uses to remove voters on change of residence grounds does not violate the Failure-to-Vote Clause or any other part of the National Voting Rights Act.

Attacks on unions and ongoing efforts to reduce the political power of the poor, people of color, and Democrats must be resisted. We must work to repeal President Trump’s Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017. This law will hurt our students as it exacerbates wealth inequality and sets limits on state and local tax deductions—a tactic that will likely result in decreased state funding for public higher education. Yet, even as the stakes have never been higher, students are, for the most part, passive.
Faculty union members need to awaken students by doing what we do best: teaching, including teach-ins aimed at helping them understand how anti-democratic public policies undermine their future. Teach-ins effectively mobilized resistance to the Vietnam War 50 years ago and today. Black Lives Matter is conducting teach-ins across the country and in Western Europe. Teach-ins on the immigration experience and DACA also have become widespread. There is no shortage of relevant topics for teach-ins. For starters, consider these: 1) surviving the 21st century workplace, 2) the crisis in student debt, 3) how privatization of public universities affects students, 4) the right to vote: from Bloody Sunday to Donald Trump, and 5) gerrymandering and the undermining of American democracy.

CONCLUSION

In the face of this well-funded, anti-union onslaught, the growing anti-intellectualism and anti-university mood of Republicans, and the specter of authoritarian populism that has culminated in the miasma of Trumpism, it is easy to feel discouraged and afraid. Left unchecked, these forces will harm our students, colleges, communities, and colleagues. We must heed Orwell’s warning about the dangers of disingenuous language deliberately formulated to mislead the unsuspecting so that they think their rights are being defended when, in fact, they are callously being eroded.

Recognizing the onslaught of cruel and deceptive political actions is not enough. We must act. We are not helpless. We have a duty to resist. We have an organization that can help us resist—our union. Our struggle will be long and hard. There will be setbacks. But we can be victorious if we remain steadfast. Be courageous. Remember the lyrics from Woody Guthrie’s “Union Maid,” “Oh, you can’t scare me. I’m sticking to the union. I’m sticking to the union ‘til the day I die!”

ENDNOTES

1. Orwell, Politics and the English Language, p. 20.
2. Agency fees are fees unions collect from nonmembers. These fees cover the cost of contract negotiations or collective bargaining and contract administration, which includes representing employees in grievances and arbitrations. Agency fees are often called fair share fees and agency shop fees. The cost of agency fees differ from union to union. Agency fees are collected through payroll deductions. By law agency fees cannot be more than union’s
membership dues. If an employee is a member of a religious group that has historically held conscientious objections to supporting a public employees organization financially, that individual could become a “conscientious objector.” In such a case, the agency fees will be donated to a qualified nonreligious, non-labor fund that is jointly determined by the employers and union. See, “Agency Fees/Union Dues: FAQ.”


4. “Right to Work Resources.” It is interesting to note the early racist and anti-Semitic history of RTW movement. In 1941, William Ruggles, a Dallas Morning News editorial writer teamed up with Vance Muse, whose grandson describes him as “a white supremacist, an anti-Semite, and a Communist-baiter.” Muse’s Christian American Association, argued that to prevent the Jewish Marxist assault on free enterprise and to maintain white supremacy in the South, it was necessary to outlaw contracts that required workers to join a union. See Pierce, “The Racist Origins of Right to Work.”

5. “Querying the Lobby Disclosure Act.” According to The Center for Media and Democracy, the National Right to Work Committee has received financial support from conservative donors like Charles and David Koch, the Walton Family Foundation (Walmart), Castle Rock Foundation (Coors), Bradley Foundation, John M. Olin Foundation, and the Searle Freedom Trust. See Riestenberg and Bottari, “Who Is Behind the National Right to Work Committee and its Anti-Union Crusade?”


12. Faculty in non-RTW states earn more money. This commentator ran paired-t tests comparing the 9-to-10-month average salaries for full-time faculty at four-year and two-year public institutions in RTW and non-RTW states. The differences are statistically significant difference. For faculty at four-year schools: \( t(49) = 3.106 \) with a two-tailed \( p \)-value of .0031. For faculty at two-year schools \( t(46) = 3.449 \) with a two-tailed \( p \)-value of .0012.

13. National Education Association, “Faculty Pay.”


22. Ferguson, “S. D. Lawmakers Approve Ban on Faculty Unions at Public Colleges” and Heidelberger, “Democrats, Campus Republicans Kill Mickelson’s Ban on Collective Bargaining.”

24. Feigenbaum et al. “From the Bargaining Table to the Ballot Box: Political Effects of Right to Work Laws.”


27. “Janus v. AFSCME: A Case to Protect Public Employee’s First Amendment Rights” and Janus, “Why I Don’t Want to Pay Union Dues.”


29. Liptak, “Supreme Court Will Hear Case on Mandatory Fees to Unions.”


36. Wolf, *op cit.*


38. Will, “Will the Largest Teachers’ Union Lose 10 Percent of Its Members?”


40. Samuels, “Walker’s Anti-Union Legislation has Labor Reeling in Wisconsin.”

41. “PSC-CUNY: About Us.” In the interest of full disclosure, it should be pointed out that the author of this article is a member of the Professional Staff Congress.

42. Interview with Barbara Bowen conducted by the author.

43. Horowitz, “Help for the Way We Work Now” and Schrader, “Here’s Why the Freelancer Economy is on the Rise.”

44. Hinton and Rezin, “A Generation Buried in Debt.” Collegedebt.com placed the level of student loan debt in the U.S. at nearly $1.59 trillion.


46. Hess, “This is the Age Most Americans Pay off Their Student Loans” and “Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2015.”

47. O’Shea, “New Grads Won’t Be Able to Retire Until 75, Study Finds.”

48. “CUNY: Mission & History.”

49. Bowen, *op cit.*

50. Fall 2015 Profile of CUNY Undergraduates.

51. Bowen, *op cit.*

52. “The Maintenance of Effort Bill Has Passed the Senate and Assembly.”

53. Mitchell, et al., “Funding Down, Tuition Up: State Cuts to Higher Education Threatened Quality and Affordability at Public Colleges.” The authors of this article point out that on an inflation-adjusted basis, the average state is spending percent less, per student than before the 2008 recession, while the cost of attending a public university a risen faster than the growth in the median income.

54. Bowen, *op cit.*
55. One such union activity is the “CUNY Student Bill of Rights.” Working with community
and student allies, the “Bill of Rights” includes demands for increased aid for books and class
materials, fair pay and workloads for faculty, and expansion of classroom space to alleviate
overcrowding. This effort stems from the successful effort by this coalition—“CUNY
Raising”—to reverse Governor Cuomo’s $485 million cut in the state’s allocation to CUNY.
See Ahmad, “CUNY Rising’ Issues Student Bill of Rights.”

56. Bowen, op cit.

Economic Prosperity.”

58. Bowen, op cit.

59. Gee, “Facing Poverty, Academics turn to Sex Work and Sleeping in Cars.”

60. Kezar and Maxey, “Faculty Matter: So Why Doesn’t Everyone Think So?

61. Schuman, “The End of Research in Wisconsin.”


63. Petroski and Pfannenstiel, “What’s Dead in the 2018 Iowa Legislature after First Funnel?”

64. Paul, “Gearing Up for CUNY Contract Talks” and Paul, “Moving Forward In Teaching
Load Reduction.”

65. “Higher Education and Privatization.”


68. Weingarten, “Teachers Rising up in Rebellion of ‘Everyday Heroes.’”

69. Bidgood and Robertson, “Striking Teachers Defied West Virginia, and Their Own Union
Too.”


71. Redmap: The Redistricting Majority Project.

72. Dovere, “Obama, Holder to Lead post-Trump Redistricting Campaign” and
“Gerrymandering On Steroids’: How Republicans Stacked The Nation’s Statehouses.”

74. Tillett, “Virginia Election Results 2017: Republican David Yancy Wins Virginia House
Seat.”

75. Gray, “Anti-Gerrymandering Group Turns in Signatures to Get On the Nov. Ballot in
Michigan.”


77. Sullivan and Smith, “Use it or Lose it: Occasional Ohio Voters may be Shut Out in
November.”

78. Voting Rights Institute, “The Real Cost of Photo ID: An Unnecessary, Expensive, and
Intrusive Voter Restriction In a Time of Fiscal Crisis.”

79. Husted, Ohio Secretary of State v A, Philip Randolph Institute et al.

80. The Trump Administration’s leading candidate for the top operational job at the U.S.
Census Bureau is Thomas L. Brunell. According to his curriculum vitae, Dr. Brunell has no
government experience. He is author of Redistricting and Representation: Why Competitive
Elections Are Bad for America. Under his leadership, the 2020 Census will be used to
determine which state gain or lose Electoral College votes and seats in the House of

82. Thompson, “Why the GOP Tax Cut Will Make Wealth Inequality So Much Worse” and “Tax Cut and Jobs Act.”


84. “DACA Teach-In”; “Immigration Law Teach-In: Sanctuary and the Rights of Immigrants on Campus”; and “Statewide Teach-in: Immigration Rights.”

85. A recently released Pew Research report shows that there is a growing anti-intellectualism among Republicans and Republican Leaning Independents. In 2017, 58 percent of Republicans and Republican Leaning Independents believe that higher education has a negative effect on the way things are going in our country while only 36 percent believe that higher education has a beneficial effect. Just two years before, these figures were reversed with 54 percent of Republicans and Republican Leaning Independents believing that there was a positive effect and 37 percent a negative effect. See Fingerhut, “Republicans Skeptical of Colleges’ Impact on U.S., But Most See Benefits for Workforce Preparation”

86. Guthrie, “Union Maid.”

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Interview with Dr. Barbara Bowen conducted by the author at the PSC-CUNY headquarters on November 13, 2017.


Black Commencement and the Value of Affinity Initiatives

By David H. Roane

In 2017, Harvard’s Black Commencement gained national headlines for being the school’s first commencement exercise intended solely for its Black students. And yet, with this occasion, Harvard was merely catching up to many other institutions across the country, including Stanford, Temple, Michigan, and schools in the California State University system. It’s almost certain that the trend toward minority-specific ceremonies will continue in future years, which might astound or concern some people. For those who continue to be shocked or confused by initiatives that appear—on the surface—exclusive in their intent, I offer a modest primer, with last year’s event at Harvard serving as an example.

While the existence of affinity initiatives, like Harvard’s Black Commencement, may seem to perpetuate the social isolation of minority students, the opposite is true. By addressing minority feelings of otherness and exclusion, these measures not only strengthen individual groups, but also strengthen the larger community.

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Overall, our nation’s college campuses are becoming more diverse. While white students accounted for 84 percent of all college students in the U.S. in 1976, they only accounted for 58 percent in 2015.\(^2\) In 2017, for the second year in a row, the majority of Harvard’s freshman class was students of color.\(^3\) Still, on most campuses the percentage of any single racial or ethnic group, apart from white, remains small.\(^4\) At Harvard specifically, according to federal data, white students represent 43 percent of the overall student body—compared to just five percent for Blacks.\(^5\)

As is the case for most of our nation’s white students, membership within the majority, or plurality, has its advantages, chief among them an entire culture normed to one’s existence and experiences. As a result, those living outside of the majority culture often feel alienated or overlooked, and are often taxed with the burden of explaining the value of their contributions.

In recent years, events at Harvard have demonstrated the extent to which Black and brown students feel alienated, invisible, or “othered.” In 2015, framed portraits of several Black law professors were defaced.\(^6\) A year later controversy ensued regarding the design of the law school shield, which had been modeled after the crest of an 18th-century slaveholding family.\(^7\) For Black students on campus, these kinds of painful gestures leave them with the paradoxical experience of being highly visible due to racial differences that simultaneously render them socially invisible.

One’s presence as a minority always represents a teachable moment for those in the majority. Minorities remain in the rather self-conscious position of having to explain themselves to the larger community, or worse, justify why they are here at all. This is their tax. This is their burden.

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**Minorities remain in the self-conscious position of having to explain themselves to the larger community, or worse, justify why they are here at all. This is their tax. This is their burden.**
general public should have already known: that police brutality really does occur. This time last year, when the Baltimore Orioles visited Boston and one of its outfielders claimed that a Red Sox fan taunted him with shouts of the N-word, some demanded cell phone evidence as proof.⁸

So, when student organizers of last year’s Harvard Black Commencement said the ceremony was an opportunity to “build fellowship and build a community,” and that its purpose was to “add something that was missing,” we might conclude that what had been missing for Black students is a thoroughly validated existence.⁹

AFFINITY INITIATIVES AS REFUGE AND SANCTUARY

As a minority, living an expository existence, instead of a validated one, has the potential to be emotionally draining and oppressive in nature. Affinity initiatives, however, offer opportunities for minorities to honor the impulse of bonding with those of similar background and experiences, where people needn’t feel the pressure to explain themselves, because who they are is assumed to be understood. It’s the pleasure of solitude, of being alone with self, only scaled up for groups. As sources of refuge and sanctuary, affinity initiatives provide a temporary reprieve from the existential tax burdened by the occasion of one’s “othered” status, effectively closing any emotional advantage gap between social groups. Relief can assume the following purposes.

Refuge from Ambassadorship

Affinity initiatives may ease the burden minorities feel in having to represent their group and serve as teachers for the outside world. For example, white students touching the hair of Black students and wondering about its texture forces Black students either to recoil or explain the rationale behind straightening versus “going natural.”

As sources of refuge and sanctuary, affinity initiatives provide a temporary reprieve from the existential tax burdened by the occasion of one’s “othered” status.
Even when performed in the spirit of cultural exchange, the task of educating members of a larger public about who one is and where one comes from—and convincing those members of the value inherent to both—can be exhausting. Living with even the vague expectation that one must serve as the cultural ambassador for an entire group can leave a person emotionally deplete.

At Harvard’s Black Commencement, each graduate donned a stole made of African Kente cloth. “Your parents, your colleagues, and those who are there in the audience are there to celebrate you because they know your common struggle,” a Harvard organizer said. “There’s a shared history; there’s a shared struggle; there’s a shared identity.”

Affinity initiatives make affirmation, empathy, and validation available in ways that don’t require any previous convincing for students to receive.

Refuge from Duality: A Sanctuary for Personal Wholeness

Fear of being excluded for their differences can drive minorities to conform in ways that don’t match who they are on the inside, resulting in a tension between external and internal realities, public and private forms of identity. Consequently, a Duboisian double-consciousness emerges in which minorities may find themselves straddling two worlds: one represented by membership within the minority or subdominant group, the other by a desire for inclusion within the majority or dominant culture. Survival requires an understanding of the norms particular to each world, proficiency in the interpretation and use of expressions associated with those norms, and the almost super-human ability to quickly switch between their cues and codes, a phenomenon known as “code switching.” For many minorities, efforts to be included within the dominant culture come with a cost, one that is paid with a sense of loss concerning, for example, one’s native culture.
Affinity initiatives, however, can provide relief from such pressures in the form of singular communities held together with cultural references that are not only shared, but native. Even temporary relief from duality can deliver lasting alleviation from the “schizophrenic-like” negotiation of living such complicated existences.

Offering a chance for repair and recovery, affinity initiatives exist as sanctuaries for self-healing and wholeness. In so doing, affinity initiatives become resources from which minorities can derive the personal strength needed for positive and constructive membership within the larger community.

The Matter of Self-Segregation

Despite the salubrious effects of affinity initiatives, their existence does raise some stubborn questions. For instance, do such initiatives over-emphasize otherness by placing too much value on difference? Do they perpetuate feelings of isolation among minorities, serving to further any existing alienation? Do they reinforce human tribal instincts, thereby mimicking the very systems of exclusion that led to the need for such affinity initiatives in the first place?

These questions, while valid, fail to acknowledge the privilege afforded to people within the majority who can cluster in ways that are exclusive to their group and not have others perceive the act as self-segregating.11 Think of all those instances involving majority white gatherings and how the homogeneity of those gatherings goes largely unnoticed, their exclusive nature barely regarded.

Harvard, like many of our institutions, continues to be appraised and claimed as white space. As the defaced portraits of black law professors demonstrate, the claiming of school space as white space occurs through the display of photographs and plaques, the naming of buildings, and, as we’ve also seen at Harvard, the use of symbolic crests belonging to old
white families. These spaces—and the natural clustering of white people within them—exist as powerful affirmations of how entrenched as the norm racial majority culture remains and, as a result, how widely available white affinity is for those who happen to be white.\footnote{12} Black affinity stands out because it stands in contrast.

Some people feel that the promotion of affinity initiatives is another example of identity politics run amok and that racial affinity grouping and the willful “re-segregation” enacted by minorities represents a step backwards in race relations. In response, one might ask, “Why that criticism now?” Where’s the outrage over the exclusion that Black and brown people have experienced historically and still experience today? It’s possible that, as a form of minority empowerment, minority affinity intimidates those in the majority who perceive it as a threat to their own privilege and position.

Finally, the more misguided aspects of post-racial thought might also lead some people to believe that, in general, diversity is something that should be lived and not engineered. Such thinking incorrectly assumes that addressing issues of race grants race more power than it deserves and that any effort to address the existence of race robs diversity of its authenticity.

Diversity and racial justice, however, cannot be created accidentally. Unless we are intentional about addressing issues of race, we risk defaulting towards systems that are set up as unjust, making us complicit in the legitimization, perpetuation, and defense of those systems. When redressing racial injustice, we do so by intentionally confronting race and the racism it produces. Only then, by creating diversity through the conscious and deliberate means of nurture, will we ever achieve diversity as ordinary nature.
THE QUEST FOR WHoleness

Ultimately, for affinity initiatives to work, they must be about wholeness—on all levels. They must function to heal both the minority group and its individual members, as well as the larger community. In fact, the relationship is causal. Heal the individual; heal the community.

Placing individual wholeness and group affinity before communal diversity is tricky business. Anytime there is an attempt to promote one part of a body, there always is the risk of denying other parts. The absurd nature of the irony should be clear in any case where a person or thing risks severing a vital so it can exist as a whole. This goes for students and their individual bodies, but also for student bodies that constitute schools as institutions. Racist systems are built on such reductions, highlighting the risks associated when using any essentialist notion—such as ethnic or racial identity—as criteria for establishing affinity among people, the ultimate effect being a potential reversion to the aforementioned tribal mindset.

Generally, at the heart of any quest for wholeness lies a paradox inherent to the creative process. What we create, including our sense of self and the institutions we observe, becomes both pronounced and imperiled precisely when the differences that constitute its complexity are greatest. Herein lies the creative struggle of trying to assemble individual and disparate components into a collective and cohesive form.

However, for academic institutions to succeed in constructing communities that are genuinely vibrant they must affirm and validate the very differences that compose their student bodies...
themselves to accusations of perpetuating climates of exclusion and pur-veying hurtful isolation.

The process governing any affinity initiative involves two steps. First is a necessary retreat inwards within the minority group, where, swaddled in the sanctuary of common experiences, members start to feel whole again. As a result, members emerge galvanized and stronger, and better able to engage the second step, which must be re-entry within the larger community. The first step is analytical in nature, involving a descent into “I”; the second step is synthetic, commanding a re-formulation back into “We.” Indeed, Harvard Black Commencement 2017 was conceived with this two-step process in mind, as Black students also were slated to attend Harvard’s regular commencement two days later.

To the extent we value community at all, affinity ought to be available for every level of self-identification no matter how specific or atomized. More important than the breaking down of identity groups into smaller and smaller sub-groups, however, is the rebuilding that must occur afterwards.

C O N C L U S I O N

So long as there exists a statistical minority and a corresponding dom-inant or majority culture, there will exist a psychology that justifies diversity as a pertinent need. So long as there remains in our schools—primary, secondary, and post-secondary—even one student who feels vulnerable to the threat of being alienated, invisible, or “othered” based on a minority characteristic, schools should compensate the student with as many sys-tematic forms of emotional support as possible.

Ultimately, the mantle of inclusion is for everyone, not just for minority populations. Consequently, schools need to conceive of plenary forms of inclusion that still somehow maintain an intimate link to con-cerns affecting minority students. Not only can both be done, they go hand in hand.
ENDNOTES

1. The University of Michigan has been holding such ceremonies for each of its Middle Eastern, Native American, Hispanic, and Black groups of students, and held its first API (Asian Pacific Islander) graduation this year. Many of the California State System schools also have Hispanic graduations. This year was the 42nd Chicano/Latino commencement at Fresno State. Also, Eastern Washington, Illinois State, Florida Atlantic, and Texas State are among the institutions with Lavender Graduations, ceremonies meant to address the interests of those within a school’s LGBTQ community.


4. As of 2015, the percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions when compared to all U.S. residents was 17 percent. It was seven percent for Asian/Pacific Islanders, 14 percent for Blacks, and 0.8 percent for American Indian/Alaska Natives. See National Center For Education Statistics, “Fast Facts.”

5. Binkley, “Black Harvard Students Holding a Graduation of Their Own.”


8. Vennochi, “Adam Jones and the Burden of Proof.”


10. Levenson, op cit.

11. Tatum explores this bias in what has become her classic meditation on race, Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations about Race.

12. Mauck’s analysis in “Noble and Greenough’s Black Alcove” serves as inspiration here.

13. For more on this dynamic, consult the introduction to Race Matters, p. 8.

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Resistance to Change: HBCUs and Online Learning

by Patrice W. Glenn Jones and Elizabeth K. Davenport

Changes in the academy have coincided with social shifts, community growth, student needs, and global conversions. During the 1990s, online learning began to receive national attention, and since 2010, online course enrollment has consistently increased. In 2014, 28 percent of all students attending post-secondary, degree-granting institutions were enrolled in at least one online course, while 13 percent were enrolled in programs offered completely online.

Public, private, and for-profit institutions alike see opportunity in online learning to expand enrollment and offset cuts in state and federal funding, as well as to offer convenient scheduling for students. However, even as they face ongoing declines in student enrollment and persistent questions about their long-term

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viability, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are rarely among them. Why have these institutions not embraced online learning? This article explores the absence of online learning programs among HBCUs, and whether this lack is due primarily to resistance to change or shortage of resources. The authors also offer strategies to increase online learning programs at HBCUs.

HBCU EVOLUTION

In 1862, Congress passed the Morrill Land-Grant Act, giving federal land to states with the purpose of endowing and supporting “at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach sub-branches of learning as we are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts.” All but one of the institutions that benefitted from the government’s investment were white institutions. Noting this disparity, the subsequent Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1890 mandated that states “open their land-grant institutions to Black students or allocate monies to Black institutions that could serve as alternatives to their white counterparts.”

In 1900, nearly 4,500 African Americans were enrolled at HBCUs; by 1938, they numbered 28,000; and by 1953, more than 78,000. Much like the African American church, HBCUs became the “ebony towers” of the African American community, and attending one was considered an honor and privilege. Their students were empowered “to express their social and cultural heritage as a part of the college experience,” and seek change in their lives and communities. Often HBCUs were “at the forefront of exploring and searching for answers to problems and concerns of their communities.” This includes preserving culture, prospering community, equipping a new generation, and modeling what’s best about America. Without other educational options, generations of African Americans attended HBCUs and were instilled with a life-long sense of loyalty to and pride in their alma maters.
TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

The availability of cellular phones and the development of the Internet are two of the most significant advances of the latter 20th century. These, along with other technological innovations, have changed the way we communicate, shop, and collaborate. We also have seen a shift in how students learn and teachers teach.

In 1993, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation piloted online courses, and by 2001, a few courses grew into 571 courses and 300 full online degree programs. By 2003, 81 percent of all U.S. post-secondary institutions offered “at least one fully online or blended course” and 34 percent offered degree programs online; during the fall of 2005, nearly 3.2 million students enrolled in at least one online course. What was once unfamiliar is now the benchmark instructional-delivery method for students at both public and private institutions. In 2008, 97 percent of all two-year community colleges offered online courses, and in 2014, 60 percent of students at for-profit institutions were enrolled in online courses.

Online learning, which for the purpose of this article is defined as technology-mediated instruction that occurs exclusively or significantly through the Internet via a computer or mobile technology (e.g., tablet or cellular phone), initially was perceived as passing pedagogical fad. But it has shown itself to be a viable method of learning and possibly the future of education, even among HBCUs. While there are many terms associated with online learning, including virtual learning, e-learning, and distance learning (a term that includes any education outside of the physical classroom, including correspondence courses), emphasis here will be placed on online courses and programs supported by mobile and virtual technology.

These online learning technologies continue to transform the higher education landscape. For example, Stanford Medical School has expanded online learning to include multi-modal virtual instruction, incorporating
videos, discussions, simulations, mobile technology, role-playing, and more. For many for-profit higher education institutions, online classrooms provide the means to recruit and retain students, both traditional and non-traditional, by offering them access to education from any location.

Despite such innovations, many scholars and practitioners are still skeptical about online learning. This resistance is often fueled by stigma more than valid concerns, experiences, or data. Similarly, the national narrative around HBCUs has been damaged by generalizations and racial stereotypes that are immensely negative. Proclaimed as “academic disaster areas,” Black institutions often are described as “subpar learning environments” with decreasing enrollment, low matriculation rates, fiscal mismanagement, and inefficient leadership. The widely broadcasted financial hardships and accreditation concerns at a few institutions have led to broad questions about the survival of HBCUs—notwithstanding their significant impact on higher education. Many ask: can HBCUs be saved?

The Problem

Since their founding, HBCUs have had an enormous impact on the education of Black Americans. While they make up just four percent of U.S. colleges and universities, HBCUs grant nearly 25 percent of the bachelor’s degrees awarded to the nation’s African American students; furthermore, 27 percent of African Americans with bachelor’s degrees in STEM areas earned them at HBCUs. At the same time, they have had a limited presence in the virtual learning landscape, with only about 20 percent of HBCUs offering online courses in 2010. While that number is increasing, the growth of online programming among HBCUs is, at best, slow. Meanwhile, HBCUs face some challenges, especially concerning enrollment. According to the Pew Research Center:

Despite innovations, many scholars and practitioners are still skeptical about online learning. This resistance is often fueled by stigma more than valid concerns or data.
Overall enrollment at [HBCUs], including non-Black students, has risen over the past several decades [see Table 1], albeit at a much slower rate than at universities overall. NCES figures show that in fall 2015, the combined total enrollment of all HBCUs was 293,000, compared with 234,000 in 1980. By comparison, enrollment at all universities and colleges nearly doubled during this time. Affirmative action, school desegregation, rising incomes, and increased access to financial aid have resulted in more African Americans attending primarily white institutions. In fall 1980, 17 percent of African American college students were enrolled at HBCUs. By 2000, that share had declined to 13 percent, and in 2015, to just nine percent.

TABLE 1. ENROLLMENT IN HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In 2015, nearly 300,000 students attended an HBCU

Total enrollment at historically black colleges or universities, in thousands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>St. Philip’s College</th>
<th>North Carolina A&amp;T State</th>
<th>Howard</th>
<th>Florida A&amp;M</th>
<th>Jackson State</th>
<th>Tennessee State</th>
<th>Texas Southern</th>
<th>Prairie View A&amp;M</th>
<th>North Carolina Central</th>
<th>Morgan State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>293</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Congress defines historically black colleges and universities as degree-granting institutions established prior to 1964 with the principal mission of educating black Americans. Analysis includes both part- and full-time students enrolled at two- and four-year colleges. Total enrollment includes students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Meanwhile, today’s students are different. Often characterized by their appreciation and knowledge of technology and social connectedness, they bring new expectations, attitudes, and limitations to college.\textsuperscript{19} They anticipate that technology will “play a large role in the learning process by allowing access to vast areas of informational sources to be incorporated into the delivery of knowledge through multimedia modes with an emphasis on entertainment during the learning process.”\textsuperscript{20} Together, the issue of declining enrollment plus the emerging profile of today’s learners points to an obvious solution to the problem of HBCUs viability. That solution is increased opportunities for online learning. And yet, HBCUs trail in implementing online programs and advancing virtual and mobile technology. Why? According to some, the answer is resistance.

**WHY RESISTANCE?**

Resistance stems from a natural reluctance to embrace change, and in this case, new technologies. But 20 years into the business of online learning, can we still consider this mode of instruction “new”? Our research points to seven explanations for the resistance among HBCUs to embrace online learning. They are: (1) fear of losing students, (2) inequitable computer access, (3) acceptance of stigma, (4) lack of funding, (5) competition, (6) flaws in organizational structure, and (7) faculty resistance.

**Fear of Losing Students**

In addition to waning enrollment, many HBCUs struggle to keep the students they have. Among HBCUs, the average student retention rate is 66 percent.\textsuperscript{21} Meanwhile, retention rates often are seven to 20 percent lower in online courses than face-to-face courses.\textsuperscript{22} This difference, and fear that it could exacerbate HBCUs’ retention challenges, may contribute to HBCUs’ sluggish implementation of online education. However, in a key study of New York community college students, researchers found
that while online students underperformed face-to-face students at the course level, online students also attained their degrees at higher rates.\(^{23}\) Other studies have found no significant differences.\(^ {24}\) Necessity and demand will drive plans to expand online learning continue. For example, as of fall 2017, approximately four percent of Florida A&M University courses were offered online, but the strategic plan calls for increasing that rate to 25 percent by 2020 and enrolling at least 1,000 students via distance learning. The fear of losing students is paradoxical.

**Inequitable Computer Access**

Many HBCU students are first-generation college students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and, therefore, are less likely to own updated technology or have access to the Internet. In 2015, only 51 percent of African Americans maintained a high-speed Internet connection in their homes while that number was 70 percent among white Americans.\(^ {25}\) This difference likely influences the number of online learners among HBCU students. Additionally, for many of these traditional-aged, low-income students, the prospect of leaving home is an incentive. For on-campus students without personal computers or reliable forms of mobile technology, online learning makes students dependent upon on-campus technology. And, while many HBCUs have learning labs and computer centers, student access may be restricted and students may be reluctant to depend on them. These limitations are further exacerbated by many African American students’ documented preferences regarding face-to-face student-teacher interaction.\(^ {26}\)

**Acceptance of Stigma**

For years, many scholars concluded that African Americans were inadequately prepared for online courses and programs, and HBCUs and their students have long been discredited by others. This has always been and comes as no surprise, even today. However, what would be surprising

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**Fear that online courses could exacerbate HBCUs’ retention challenges may contribute to HBCUs’ sluggish implementation of online education.**
is if HBCU leaders succumbed to the stigma associated with their students’ ability to learn in online environments.

Race and age have been identified as factors that influence online student achievement. In a study of 40,000 community and technical college students, researchers determined that younger, African American males from low socioeconomic backgrounds were among the students with the lowest success in online courses.27 However, other studies support the converse; some indicate that student-learning outcomes have increased for online compared to traditional leaners, and students, at times, were more satisfied in online courses.28 Furthermore, the online environment offers students the opportunity to learn more by doing; this is particularly important among African American students whose preferences for learning often are more kinesthetic and action-based.29 Ultimately, gaps in achievement exist between African American and white students in just about every aspect of learning. These gaps, which are likely arbitrary and biased, do not conclude that African American students cannot perform in online courses. For the most part, most would agree that any achievement disparity is linked to inequities in preparation, instructional quality, access to resources, and even funding.

**Lack of Funding**

Technology requires a constant cash flow. For HBCUs struggling to stay afloat, the costs can be a stretch, or even an impossibility. As Ivory Toldson, former executive director of the White House Initiative on HBCUs, stated, “In many ways, HBCU funding mirrors the economy, which was falling off a fiscal cliff near the end of the Bush administration… (and) has yet to make a full recovery.”30 More than 70 percent of HBCU students receive Pell Grants, and fewer donations from alumni and smaller endowments often fuel some of the financial challenges
HBCUs face. Unlike administrators at institutions where funding is less dependent upon federal aid, many HBCU leaders must weigh cuts to faculty and staff versus investments in learning technologies. Additionally, if HBCUs are not already engaged in virtual and mobile learning technologies, it is unlikely these leaders would favor new spending in online learning.

Making the community aware of technology needs at HBCUs must be a priority. HBCUs should take advantage of social media, e-mail and other communications to spread the word about their technology needs and to solicit donations. Funding should be prioritized for technology initiatives and their importance should be recognized.

**Technology requires a constant cash flow. For HBCUs struggling to stay afloat, the costs can be a stretch, or even an impossibility.**

**Competition**

Perhaps the most significant factor crippling HBCUs today is the prevalence of online for-profit programs. Like HBCUs, for-profit colleges are more likely to serve minority students, including single parents, with lower family incomes and weaker test scores and academic backgrounds. In 2009, nearly two million students attended U.S. for-profit colleges, up from 300,000 in 1986. In 2010, as many as 10 percent of all U.S. college students were estimated to be enrolled in for-profit institutions. These institutions take in considerably more Pell Grant dollars per student than non-profits that serve similar students. As HBCUs compete for the same federal dollars, for-profits pose a substantial threat. At schools like University of Phoenix Online, once the highest producer of African American graduates, students who need college-work-family flexibility are finding it outside HBCU campuses.

Traditionally HBCUs have been viewed as places for underdogs, but online for-profit programs have seized that particular marketplace by offering convenience and a wide array of programs. With flexible admissions requirements, shorter programs, career-placement promises, and
aggressive marketing strategies, leaders of these institutions capitalize on the same demographic of students as HBCUs, including African American students and other students of color.

**Flaws in Organizational Structure**

Another factor potentially contributing to resistance among HBCUs is flaws in their organizational structure, including frequent turnover among their leaders. Without consistent, visionary leaders, it is unlikely that any institution—including HBCUs—could establish viable online learning programs. Many primarily white institutions have welcomed innovation as essential to university education, and their early integration of online learning has afforded them an opportunity to learn from poor technology choices, failed management, and the like. However, HBCUs, with their reluctant start, have missed much of this learning curve and thus have not created the organizational structure to advance and maintain online learning and other education innovations. For example, HBCUs are just beginning to widely employ online learning staff specialists. Instead, to save money, the roles of online learning and instructional design specialists have been relegated to information technology (IT) staff. Though valuable in maintaining the integrity of network systems, IT staff often lack the instructional knowledge to work with faculty to design and develop didactic and engaging online learning programs.

**Traditionally HBCUs have been viewed as places for underdogs, but online for-profit programs have seized that particular marketplace by offering a wide array of programs.**

Faculty Resistance

Many faculty have been wary of online education, in general, and reluctant to move their courses online, specifically. This is particularly true at non-profit institutions, both public and private, and among faculty who have never facilitated online courses. According to Gibson, Harris, and Colaric, acceptance of online instruction is correlated with acceptance of
technology generally. Furthermore, while younger faculty tend to embrace the use of technology, many HBCU faculty are older. Their resistance to technology often develops from worry over the stability of their jobs. Faculty also are concerned about their visibility in an online course, their ability to convey personality in the environment, and student perceptions of their authenticity. Still, it is important to note that the perceptions of faculty who have never taught online courses are in complete opposition to those of faculty with the most experience in online courses.

Resistence Amid Success

Some insist that technology does not fulfill the needs of their students. Among the top schools who are not even considering offering online degrees is Atlanta’s all-women Spelman College, which boasts the highest graduation rate (83 percent) among all HBCUs, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education. Said Spelman President Beverly Daniel Tatum in a written statement to U.S. News and World Report:

The mission of Spelman College is focused on developing the intellectual, ethical, and leadership potential of our students. We believe that we can do that best in the context of a residential campus experience where students can engage in a variety of meaningful learning opportunities with faculty, staff and each other, in and out of the classroom. While we encourage the use of technology and support faculty in their use of the web and other technology-based teaching tools, an online degree program is not desired at this time because it falls outside of our current strategic focus.

Some would argue that Spelman’s resistance to online learning is necessary to maintain its elite status among HBCUs. Online learning, after all, increases access. With their current success, Spelman may be
poised to persist with online resistance, maintaining a conformist selectivity. However, for most HBCUs, online learning provides a necessary lifeline for failing enrollment and dwindling success rates.

STRATEGIES FOR HBCUS

So how do HBCU academic teams begin to increase online course offerings? The simple answer is “strategically.” Ultimately expansion into online learning requires consideration of institutional culture and regulatory guidelines, as well as for specific student and faculty needs. However, nine research-based steps likely will improve HBCUs’ online student success and faculty satisfaction:

1. Engage instructional designers and virtual learning specialists.

So how do HBCU academic teams begin to increase online offerings? The simple answer is “strategically.”

To save money, some institutions have not hired instructional design and virtual learning specialists, instead adding those responsibilities to the workloads of IT staff. While both groups of practitioners contribute to the quality of online courses, they are not interchangeable. Course design matters. When students have clear directions and expectations, they are less likely to drop out of their online courses. Directions and expectations often depend on the quality of course design and language used. While faculty serve as subject-matter experts, not all are able to convert their face-to-face practices to the online environment. Instructional designers and virtual learning specialists can help create videos, audio files, and other instructional components to engage their online learners. They are uniquely qualified to support online faculty and to evaluate online courses for quality, integrity, and efficacy. Intentional course design and curriculum support promotes more in-depth learning.
2. **Train online faculty.**
A healthy relationship has been found between an instructor’s social presence in a course and their students’ success. Effective online instructors embrace personal intrusion. They permit students to call and text, respond to e-mails promptly, and even reach out to students who have been absent. Many novice online faculty do not understand the implications of their online social presence and accessibility to students. Online faculty who allow the greater imposition in their personal lives encourage the greatest perception of faculty engagement and student-instructor interaction, and counter feelings of student isolation. Furthermore, the type and timeliness of instructional feedback contributes to online student engagement and learning. Providing all faculty with professional development training will establish generalized, and institution-specific best practices, as well as guidelines for developing content and timely feedback.

3. **Orient all students to the online learning environment.**
Before any student is enrolled in an online course, they should complete an online orientation. This limited workshop, designed and facilitated by the distance learning team of instructional designers and online faculty, would address self-efficacy, self-directed learning skills, learning management system functionality, communicating with peers and faculty, as well as time management. Because online learners are self-directed, discipline is important. Researchers who investigated self-efficacy, self-regulation, and performance among African American HBCU students found that student performance related significantly to Internet self-efficacy. They also found that self-efficacy correlated positively with self-regulation. Too many students lack the ability to self-direct their learning, while instructors expect them to have this basic knowledge.
4. Expand online learning in graduate and upper-level undergraduate courses.

While some research has found no correlation between age and online learning performance, other studies point to better performance among older students in an online environment. With these findings in mind, many universities offer more online courses for graduate students. Older students often are more self-regulated and, with the increasing responsibilities of adulthood, often more determined and intrinsically motivated to complete their programs. Faculty should consider prior experience and practical application of professional content to create more in-depth meaning for online graduate and upper-level undergraduate students. It is essential to establish structures that support expansion of online learning among adult students.

Because online learners are self-directed, discipline is important. Researchers have found that student performance relates significantly to Internet self-efficacy.

5. Select a strategic number of online courses for first- and second-year students.

As previously mentioned, some research suggests that younger students from low socio-economic backgrounds struggle in online environments. Consequently, the calculated selection of first- and second-year courses is important. For the most part, the online environment is text-based, although advancements in video and audio modalities have supplemented word-intensive platforms; therefore, writing courses and text-heavy courses provide logical transitions to the online environment. Thus, HBCUs should consider offering first- and second-year text and writing-based courses (e.g., English, humanities, and literature) to honors freshmen and those with previous online experience. Developmental courses, however, should not be offered online. HBCUs also should consider research that suggests students perform worst in social sciences and professional courses. Hybrid courses, which are commonly identified as courses with 30 to 79 percent of the content delivered online, provide a great alternative to
entirely online courses for first- and second-year students. A U.S. Department of Education report indicated that blending face-to-face and computer-supported learning modalities were more efficient than one or the other. Thus, HBCUs should consider testing various hybrid and also web-assisted courses (defined as those with one to 29 percent of content delivered online.)

6. Market fully online degree programs to a diverse population of students.
Students of other races attend HBCUs, and they are welcome. However, the idea of specifically recruiting students of other races and ethnicities to HBCUs is controversial. To some, it contradicts the mission of HBCUs. However, the need for diversity is evident. Therefore, HBCU administrators should consider marketing online programs to nontraditional (ages 27 and older), second-career, graduate, and international students, as well as military veterans, to fulfill diversity initiatives.

7. Give extra consideration when enrolling male students in online courses.
Improving learning outcomes for African American males has become a national initiative. According to Palacios and Wood, male students tend to perform better in face-to-face courses; therefore, synchronous components, like interactive web conferences, are valuable in the course design of online courses with high numbers of male students. HBCU administrators should ensure that various modalities (e.g., audio, video, and synchronous) are used, and establish enrollment practices so that advisors consider the number of male students enrolled in each online course. Academic advisors should familiarize themselves with the online courses that have higher completion rates among all students and specifically males.
8. **Designate specific advisors to enroll and monitor new and undergraduate male online students.**

Some research suggests African American male students are reluctant to engage with faculty because of stereotypical ideas about African American male student intelligence; this apprehension results in withdrawal. Taking down the virtual veil that exists within many online learning environments could improve African American male student engagement. Faculty-student relationships characterized by safety, empowerment, acceptance, and nurturing are likely to improve student learning. Therefore, an advisor who exercises both intrusive and nurtured advising, working in conjunction with faculty, can promote an increased sense of these qualities among African American male students enrolled in online courses. Phone calls, e-mails, and in-person contacts (when possible) are necessary.

**Taking down the virtual veil that exists within many online learning environments could improve African American male student engagement.**

9. **Expand online learning through online and face-to-face student support services.**

Engage students where they are. The number of students using cellular phones is greater than those using computers. According to the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, many HBCU students rely on institution-provided access to computers and the Internet. It is vital to expand the reach of online learning through mobile technology and apps that support subject-matter content and student self-efficacy. Furthermore, the number of traditional on-campus students enrolled in online courses is increasing. Therefore, it is also important to maintain on-campus resources, such as work spaces with computer and Internet access, tutoring, and other academic and student support services. HBCU administrators also should consider structuring hybrid and web-assisted courses so that first- and second-year, on-campus students are required to use these supports. These services would promote a sense
of community and engagement among on-campus students and faculty in online courses.

CONCLUSION

As Durkheim states, “Education is culturally specific, and education is rooted in and reflects the conditions, worldview, and purposes of its parent society.”54 Today, HBCU leaders are asked to defend the relevancy of their institutions, particularly in relation to the demands of a global, technological society. HBCUs have been slow to develop online programs and courses, but they can no longer resist the online learning movement. As these institutions navigate their way forward amidst funding deficiencies and technological advances, online learning will provide a viable strategy for sustainability.

It doesn’t make sense to rely on diminishing state and federal funds to fuel our institutions. In the face of funding cuts and enrollment challenges, HBCUs must strategically expand access and opportunity by appealing to a larger demographic of students. The African American population is not homogeneous, and there is diversity in the learning needs of potential HBCU students. For some HBCUs, diversity via online program expansion is a means of survival. Moreover, with smartphones serving as a primary mode of communication and information, HBCUs must actively innovate and integrate mobile learning technology for course management and learning support. The innovation associated with effective implementation of online learning programs and courses may be costly, but HBCUs cannot afford to operate without this technology. The price of resistance is one that many of the nation’s HBCUs cannot afford.

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The Perception of Progress: Conceptualizing Institutional Response to Student Protests and Activism

By Katherine S. Cho

On November 9, 2015, the University of Missouri’s president and chancellor announced their resignations in the midst of growing media coverage of student activism calling attention to issues of campus racism and diversity. While UM’s student protests gained national headlines, student resistance across the nation has surged since 2014, as students protest, demonstrate, and sit-in and die-in against racism on their campuses, and around the broader and parallel issues of students feeling unacknowledged, silenced, and oppressed by their colleges and universities. These protests are not merely symbolic demonstrations of collective unhappiness, but are larger critiques about national issues, such as racism, by students demanding institutional action and accountability.

Student and university clashes are not new. In the 1960s, American college students held acts of resistance as part of the Civil Rights Movement; in the 1980s to call on universities to divest from corporations...
supporting apartheid; and in the 2010s in solidarity with the #BlackLivesMatter movement. The most recent wave around campus racism has led some institutions to release statements, or hire chief diversity officers, while others remain ambivalent to student concerns. Yet, the similarity of student demands from decade to decade suggests something is not working. For example, the University of Missouri’s student protesters, known as Concerned Student 1950, have pointed to unmet issues from a set of 1969 student demands. The continued iteration of student demands and cyclical concerns demonstrates the need to not only reconsider how we frame the issue, but how we conceptualize it. Instead of examining the impact of student resistance and activism on institutional accountability, what of the reverse direction—how institutional responses and (lack of) accountability sustain the very campus racial climates that concern and suffocate students. This change in perspective leads to the conceptualization of what I call the Institutional Response Framework as a way to analyze the relationship between higher education institutions and the student activists who push for institutional improvement with regard to campus racial climate.

BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL ROOTS

The current realities for Students of Color include discrimination, bias, and silencing that, together with various sociohistorical structures, interpersonal dynamics, political contexts, and institutional history, comprise campus racial climate. Poor campus racial climate encapsulates overt, covert, and colorblind racism that marginalize Students of Color. These displays of racism are not merely limited to the actions of campus members, but also include symbols of slavery and colonialism including campus statues and buildings’ namesakes.
The majority of research on student protests focuses on students: their context for change, their actions/strategies taken, and the immediate consequences. While these studies provide a foundational context regarding student resistance, this student-centered approach places the onus of positive change on students, and the implications of such research focus (only) on what students have, could, and should do to hold institutions accountable.

Outside this scope, some studies consider faculty and staff motivations and/or their roles to support students, and others suggest how institutions could support student resistance through the practice of partnership. But many institutional responses do not provide partnership to students. Indeed, the continued presence of student protests suggests that their responses do not mitigate, alleviate, or improve campus racial climate.

Moreover, studies that incorporate organizational theory to examine institutional change tend to lean on theories of neo-institutionalism, which focus more on external factors than the localized power dynamics between individual groups of actors. As such, campus decisions are tied to what the field is doing at large and not on the on-the-ground dynamics—specifically, the localized racism and tensions that drive the initial acts of resistance. In response, this paper is part of the next generation of scholarship needed to merge student resistance, institutional accountability, and organizational theory in ways that honor the realities, tensions, and struggles of students.

The Institutional Response Framework is rooted in several key theories. While institutional theory helps explain the decision-making of colleges and universities, the dynamics within campus racial climate protests necessitates Critical Race Theory. Moreover, racial formation theories also help inform how colleges and universities address their racialized histories and current contexts.

**This paper is part of the next generation of scholarship needed to merge student resistance, institutional accountability and organizational theory.**
POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

Within institutional theory, the concepts of dominant coalitions and resource dependence theory examine the localized power dynamics and external forces that impact institutional responses to students. University action depends on dominant coalitions, or the groups of stakeholders who vie to make decisions such as administrators, faculty, governing boards, alumni, and to some extent, students. Decision-making also depends on revenue streams—for example, monies from federal and state governments, foundations, campus athletics, alumni, and students and parents. However, because colleges and universities confer their degrees, students cannot simply withhold their tuition to force institutional change; students are both actors and recipients within higher education. To circumvent this power imbalance, student activists seize upon an alternative revenue stream: an institution’s reputation.

Universities, and other organizations, need positive reputations and approval by their audience to survive, because reputation relates to other revenues, such as donor and alumni gifts. By harnessing social media and tying local campus incidences with movements like #BlackLivesMatter, students magnify the reputational threat to institutions. As such, universities opt for changes, not because of campus climate concerns, but as a defense against negative attention resulting from student resistance.

RACE AT THE CENTER

The centrality of race and racism seems obvious within the context of campus racial protests, yet this centrality ties to a deeper indictment of how traditional research ignores or “explains away” racism through power dynamics and organizational theory. Originally housed within Critical Race Legal Studies, Critical Race Theory poses the following five tenets:
1. the centrality of race and racism, and their intersection with other forms of subordination;
2. the challenging of dominant ideologies supported by traditional research and assumptions of objectivity;
3. the legitimization of experiential knowledge by marginalized communities;
4. the transformative relationship linking theory with social justice action; and
5. the interdisciplinary nature that challenges ahistoricism and acontextualism.¹⁴

This fifth tenet, in other words, necessitates examining the historical, political, socioeconomical, and contextual surroundings.

Higher education cannot be separated from its history: the slaves who built campuses, the indigenous people murdered for campus land, and the veterans of color who were tracked into vocational programs and/or less selective colleges through discriminatory policies like the federal G.I. Bill.¹⁵ To decontextualize and ahistoricize this background only adds to the unmet needs and struggles of Students of Color. Even further, interest-convergence theory, rooted in Critical Race Theory, explains how dominant institutions adopt racially just policies when it benefits their agenda.¹⁶ For example, the University of Missouri acted on racial climate concerns after athletes on the revenue-generating football team decided, in solidarity with Concerned Student 1950, to boycott future games.¹⁷

**Institutional Racism**

Racial formation is the sociohistorical process by which groups are othered and subsequently excluded, exploited, and even exterminated due to their race.¹⁸ Similarly, higher education institutions alienate student protesters and activists by minimizing their concerns, which insinuates a deeper level of colorblind racism. Colorblindness, as the aversion, rejection, and invalidation of racism, avoids racialized terminology with an (intentional) ignorance of examining the mechanisms and systems that produce racial inequality. The lack of explicitly, or even minimally, addressing racism and white supremacy embedded within colleges and universities suggests colorblindness on an institutional level.
CONCEPTUALIZING INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

The Institutional Response Framework theorizes different ways colleges and universities respond to student demands, based on several dimensions. The first dimension is the extent to which colleges and universities meet the demands of students, ranging between buffering and bridging. Institutions buffer or mitigate external forces from interrupting their internal machinations to preserve the status quo. Contrastingly, institutions bridge to external demands by adopting, incorporating, and transforming their internal workings. The second dimension is the extent to which higher education institutions share power with students, manifesting metaphorically into both having a seat at the table and being able to make decisions. These two dimensions create a two-by-two matrix for four types of responses: (1) schisming, (2) appeasement, (3) co-option, and (4) partnership.

Schisming—When faced with student demands/concerns, institutions can schism, separate, and disengage from the conversation through apathy, minimization, or criminalization. Through apathy, institutions neither formally acknowledge student concerns nor invest any financial or personnel resources to address them. In this manner, institutions buffer student concerns while retaining control of the conversation. Similarly, institutions minimize issues of campus racism to be singular incidents or out of the ordinary and evade their culpability in creating poor campus racial climates. More recently, higher education institutions, like the University of Wisconsin System, have sought to silence students by criminalizing student activism, and making it possible to expel students who protest and “disrupt” campus activities. With these measures, institutions not only remove themselves from current student resistance, but stifle future speech as well.

The lack of explicitly, or even minimally, addressing racism and white supremacy embedded within colleges suggests colorblindness on an institutional level.
Appeasement—Institutions can appear to provide control to students but ultimately buffer against their demands. For example, the adoption of non-performative diversity language provides institutions with the appearance of effort, yet does not reflect the diversity-related practices needed to improve the lives of Students of Color.22 Similarly, institutions suggest students are part of the university conversation by inviting them to committee meetings or task forces, even as they rely on bureaucratic red tape to delay action or create strategic (symbolic) plans without effects. For example, a typical tactic to appease student demands for more faculty of color is to make those hires in non-tenure track positions that do not sustainably address student concerns.23

Co-option—Co-option is the intentional merger or erasure of a subordinate group within the dominant group to preserve the existing organizational structure and power.24 In a campus setting, co-option often looks like the convenient rebranding of institutional decisions that minimize underlying racial issues. For instance, within prison divestment protests, students have centered systemic racism as a pivotal issue, and yet resolutions like Columbia University’s ASCRI [Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing] statement have omitted mention of student groups or concerns.25 Instead, they rationalize prisons as bad economic investments because of community sentiments and financial concerns.26 At face value, these decisions continue to decenter racism and co-opt the narrative of decision-making, even as they bridge to student demands. Co-option is skewed collaboration. Even as colleges and universities use students’ knowledge and action, they refuse to allow students to have power, a seat at the table, or authorship.

Partnership—Partnership presents a key difference from co-option. In partnership, students have sovereignty and control to address their concerns and/or proposed demands. As students have more organizational power as decision-makers, and as they enter into shared leadership with
administrators, their relationship with the institution becomes more equitable. The idea of shared leadership includes not co-opting progress already made, building trust, and acknowledging past efforts. However, partnership may remain idealistic due to the embedded power imbalance between institutions and students. Moreover, partnership must account for the transient nature of students. To that degree, even the consideration of students as an external force to the university requires a transformation in how higher education institutions perceive students.

THE DIMENSIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Institutional responses are dynamic in nature and may range across the four quadrants, even at the same institution, depending on evolutions in administration, budgetary concerns, as well as student resistance. However, these four quadrants—schisming, appeasement, co-option, and partnership—can never be decontextualized outside of racism. As colleges and universities continue to marginalize Students of Color, the degree to which institutions reify institutional racism transforms this 2D model into 3D. This third dimension ranges between institutional colorblindness and institutional racial consciousness as seen in Figure 1:

FIGURE 1: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE FRAMEWORK
When colleges and universities affirm themselves as incapable of maintaining racism, they are engaging in institutional colorblindness, which consequently invalidates the racialized experiences of students. Manifestations include the language of meritocracy, for example, how “certain” students’ test scores are “not rigorous enough,” and thereby decontextualizing merit from the racialized sociohistorical contexts that have privileged white students for generations; in doing so, colleges and universities seek to affirm that they are objective and neutral.\textsuperscript{28} This colorblind attitude not only (white)washes higher education’s ugly history of excluding communities of color, but also reinforces the fallacy that institutions cannot be racist or promote racist climates. Moments of campus racism are painted as just that—moments, rather than revealed to be part of a larger narrative around unhealthy campus racial climates.

Conversely, institutional race consciousness explicitly recognizes racial differences and inequalities.\textsuperscript{29} On campuses, this looks like not only the recognition of racialized experiences of student protesters, but also the critical examination and implementation of responses that address poor racial climate. While racial realism (i.e., the permanence of racism) suggests white supremacy will linger on our campuses, institutional racial consciousness serve as a necessary and reflexive guide for colleges and universities to fight against racism and other oppressive systems.\textsuperscript{30}

**HISTORICAL EXAMPLES**

The construction of Ethnic Studies departments on college campuses exemplifies various components of the Institutional Response Framework. Specifically, how institutions responded to the Black Studies movement in the 1960s demonstrates a change from still typical institutional responses of schisms.\textsuperscript{31} At that time, anti-racism activism, including hunger strikes, from the Soul Brothers Association, led by Bobby Seale
and Huey Newton, established the African American Studies department at San Francisco State College, the first ever. And yet, more than 50 years later, the threat of co-option and divestment remains for many ethnic-specific departments and centers today.

Similarly, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) moved from an institutional response of disengagement via the formalization of its Chicana/o Studies department in 1993. However, the program has struggled with poor funding and a lack of full-time faculty and faculty lines dedicated to its growth, which reveal an institutional strategy of appeasement. In pursuing appeasement, institutions first set up groups to fail and then either justify a disengaged response, such as the 1990s recommendation to suspend the Chicana/o Studies major at UCLA, or set the stage for co-option through retrenchment.

Both the 1968 creation of the first African American Studies department, at San Francisco State College, and the 1993 establishment of the Chicana/o department at UCLA were results of student resistance that forced institutional movement across the framework’s quadrants. Eventually both institutions hired tenure-lined faculty for the respective departments, demonstrating financial commitment and a sense of permanent investment, which axially moves towards institutional bridging. But ongoing issues of divestment, struggles for control, and even the historical erasure of student contribution threaten this progress.

Ongoing issues of divestment, struggles for control, and even the historical erasure of student contribution threaten this progress.

RECONCEPTUALIZING INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The central thesis behind campus racial protests for many students, particularly Students of Color, comes from their critique of current campus racial climates and their threatened sense of belonging, which ultimately impacts retention, graduation rates, and quality of diverse learning environments. These concerns are especially critical given the changing
demographics of college students and, specifically, the growing number of students from nonwhite racial/ethnic backgrounds.\textsuperscript{36}

The Institutional Response Framework aims to challenge the discourse around institutional accountability and student resistance. The conceptualization of how colleges and universities respond to student protests shifts the onus and focus \textit{away} from students and \textit{onto} institutions and their (in)actions. Moreover, the Institutional Response Framework provides language and \textit{power} for student activists to understand and contest the institutional responses with which they may not agree, and for institutional agents to be reflexive in the ways they (do not) assist and support students. Further, the Institutional Response Framework serves as a conceptual critique for colleges and universities so that institutional responses can no longer be single, siloed reactions. Instead, these responses are part of an ongoing narrative of how institutions continue to threaten the livelihood of Students of Color. The conceptualization from the Institutional Response Framework pushes and expands on organizational theory and higher education research to name race and racism explicitly, and to do it in ways that honor the localized concerns of our marginalized young people. Organizational theory \textit{requires} a racialized lens. As a field informing a significant body of research aiming to explain the tensions at and across colleges and universities, higher education organizational theory cannot disregard the socio-historical context and continued permeation of racism. To do otherwise is a disservice to students, higher education progress, and the field at large.

Ultimately, the most significant implication of this framework is the changing of campus racial climates. Students change institutions through their resistance and activism. They mobilize, strategize, build networks, create demands, and continue these actions while still being students with classes, assignments, and more. But students are only part of the equation.

\textit{The conceptualization of how colleges respond to student protests shifts the onus and focus \textit{away} from students and \textit{onto} institutions and their (in)actions.}
Institutions, as the other half, must answer their concerns and the limited scholarship about institutions confounds their culpability and responsibility. The Institutional Response Framework complicates the questions around accountability and its relationship with student action, protests, and activism regarding campus racial climate. College campuses now, more than ever, are the current battleground for racism and race-based ideas, including the overt presence of white supremacy. And without a change, without a different interrogation on institutions and the responses they take, all we can expect, five, ten, twenty years from now, is what we have already seen.

ENDNOTES

2. Rhoads, “Student Activism.”
3. Concerned Student 1950 was named for the year that the first Black students were admitted to the university.
10. Scott and Davis, op cit., see chapter 8.
17. Jaschik, “What the Protests Mean.”
19. Ibid., pp. 110, 132.
25. Wong and Green, “Campus Politics.”
26. At most, the statement includes a section called “Additional Views of Some Committee Members” with one mention of, “racial disparities” as a consequence of prisons; “ACSRI Resolution,” p. 2.
30. For issues like gender equity, the third dimension of institutional racism would be intersectional, not replaced by feminist theory and the like. The erasure of race, even within social movements demonstrates how “justice” can still marginalize communities of color; Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins,” p. 1244.
32. *Ibid*.
33. Aguilar-Hernández, “¡Sí Se Pudo!,” p. 122. Retrenchment policies, used by institutions, target “failing” departments to downsize, create structural changes, or surrender their control—all under the possible threat of departmental closure; Gates, “Isomorphism,” p. 271.
34. Aguilar-Hernández, *op cit*.
35. Hurtado, et al., *op cit*.
36. For the next generation of potential college-going students (ages 5 to 17), between 2000 to 2016, Latinx students have increased 16 to 25 percents, Asians from three to five percent, and Multi-racial students, from two to four percent. Musu-Gillette et al., “Status and Trends,” p. iii.

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SPECIAL:
The Best of Thought & Action
The University Besieged

By Jeff Lustig

INTRO BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

Plaintive, personal, and powerful, Jeff Lustig’s 2011 article is a love letter to the academy, written by a dying man. Lustig, a leader in the 1960s Free Speech Movement and a professor emeritus of government at California State University, Sacramento, recollects his days as a student protester in the campus plaza, where he learned that, “a public education was not just an education funded by the public, but an education that prepared students to be parts of a public—to be citizens.” This idea, that the American university should be a place that “seeks to preserve a democratic politics and provide means for the society to reflect on its past and its possible futures,” is under attack. We have seen this in Wisconsin where the governor attempted to delete “search for truth” from the university’s mission. We see it across the nation. Shortly after this article’s publication and his receipt of NEA’s “Democracy in Action” prize, Lustig died of pancreatic cancer. His words haunt us. They tell us to persist.
The American university today is a battered figure on the public domain, half-relic of the past, half-orphan of the present, celebrated on the dais while denigrated in the boardroom and starved by state legislatures. Administrators say our campuses can’t survive if they are constantly challenged from within. Many students and faculty believe they won’t survive if they’re not.

The university is in crisis.

The future hangs in the balance.

This is where I came in.

It’s where I came in in my own college career and how things also looked from within the Free Speech Movement (FSM) and educational reform movements at the University of California, Berkeley in the early 1960s, as the nation’s former land grant universities morphed into corporate grant universities, and UC President Clark Kerr celebrated the con-
vergence of the university and industry. Those were years of conflict, of charge and counter-charge, committees and counter-committees, bulletins from above and pronunciamentos from below. “Bliss it was... to be alive,” in William Wordsworth’s lyric; “But to be young was very heaven.”

THE CLASSROOM AND THE PLAZA

I received my degrees from Berkeley in those years, my B.A., my M.A., and my Ph.D. And three other distinctions too: my arrests in the FSM, the Third World Strike, and People’s Park. Acquiring each of those honors taught me a lot. And now looking back—having gone from being a Young Turk into being an Old Fart—I see what a special education it was, and how much it was a product of the two realms: the classroom and the plaza. (I include in the “plaza,” a number of places, both on and off campus, including Sproul Plaza in Berkeley, meeting venues, demonstrations, ad hoc panels, and public debates.) I realize now how much I am indebted to both realms and to the American university itself, in all its contradictions, for what I study and care about, and who I am today.

In the plaza (in the extended sense) I learned not only about politics—how to think politically and speak publicly. I also learned about more academic things, including intellectual topics and subjects outside the curriculum of the classrooms.

One of those topics was the university itself—its historic purposes and contested character, and it is the topic I will address here. And yes, it was in the plaza that this subject first came up for me, not the classroom. It came up there partly because of the protests we were engaged in, and partly because Kerr’s just-published *Uses of the University* made a number of claims about the institution that were widely celebrated—though not by students on the campuses of the country. My understanding of the
university was extended in evening colloquia and panels with campus faculty. There were no formal courses about the institution despite its long and rich history and despite it being the place we were all gathered, working together. The situation is the same, I think, today. Those arguments in the plaza and presentations on the panels were the first places I heard about the origins of the university in 12th century Bologna and Paris, about things like the liberal arts and academic freedom, of names like Cardinal Newman, Robert Hutchins, and James B. Conant, or of the fact that the Puritans established Harvard, the nation’s first higher education institution as early as 1636.

In the years since, I’ve spent a good deal of time in various struggles and dissenting efforts, in union activities, writing leaflets and newsletters, and helping organize votes of no-confidence. All this has been the expression and outgrowth of ideas about the university I’d come, as a result of my education (in classroom and plaza), to take seriously. I’ll discuss some of those ideas because the university which embodies them is an embattled figure in the public domain, besieged not just by state disinvestment in higher education but by institutional trends and theories within the universities themselves. These trends and theories have presented us with difficult predicaments and pose a danger, I propose, for the larger society.

DEFINING THE UNIVERSITY

What, then, is a university? It’s been a lot of things over the centuries. But three of its aspects or roles have struck me as particularly important over the last few years: (1) its role with the liberal arts, (2) its political role, and (3) its character as a community.

A commitment to the liberal arts has been distinctive of the university since its origins. In fact, Cardinal Newman, in his great book, The Idea of the University, referred to “a University or Liberal Education” as one and the same thing.¹ That hasn't meant that everyone had to be a
history or English major; but it has meant that students are exposed to humanities courses and ways of thinking while at college, and that the spirit of the liberal arts—creative, critical, and contextualizing—has extended to even the teaching of things like engineering, the sciences, and—though it may be a stretch—business administration. (For the Greeks, the study of business was actually one of the menial not the liberal arts).

The Greeks and Romans saw the liberal arts as those skills that were necessary to make a person free. Traditionally, there were seven of them; though each era has argued about what those seven were. Science and history were added in the 19th century, and the social sciences, for many, in the 20th. But these arts were not exactly the same as our disciplines. They were different ways of thinking about and attending to the world, different sensibilities that needed to be developed in students if they were to become fully developed people—or, again, free.

The idea is clarified by a remark of Chiura Obata’s, the wonderful Japanese painter, who, in the 1930s taught at Berkeley, and was later interned in Topaz, Utah. In a book Obata wrote about the internment, he says he was hired at UC to teach art, but first had to “teach my students beauty. No one should pass through four years of college without [being] given the knowledge of beauty, and the eyes with which to see it.” That comment about the necessity of knowing beauty and being given the eyes with which to see it is about as good a statement of one aspect of the liberal arts approach as you’ll find.

Knowing beauty and being given the eyes to see it—that’s about as good a statement about the liberal arts as you’ll find.

So the liberal arts aren’t bodies of knowledge that can be ladled out. They can’t be set down on a study sheet (though developing them requires the mastery of specific bodies of knowledge). They are abilities, like the ability to see beauty or do critical inquiry, and are cultivated or brought out (e-duced) of students’ latent powers. In this sense, a university helps students develop their powers, helps them to develop “lives of rich signif-
How it does this, like any cultivation, is a little mysterious and may take years to bear fruit. I’m reminded of Thomas Carlyle: “When the oak-tree [falls] the whole forest echoes with it; but a hundred seeds are planted silently by some unnoticed breeze.” We faculty are in this seed wafting business, the silent breeze business. (Which is not the same as the hot air business.) And the fruit of such cultivation when we’re successful, C. Wright Mills noted in his writings on education, “is the self-educating, self-cultivating man or woman.”

A lot more could be said about this topic, but I’ll end by observing that this liberal arts culture sets the university off from the rest of the society. Preserving it requires a certain autonomy from that society. It makes the campus a special place. How special became clear to me 10 years ago when I was helping organize the California Faculty Association’s public hearings around the state about the future of the university. Some alumni of California State University (CSU) campuses spoke at those hearings, and a few referred to the campus they’d once attended as having seemed to them like a “temple,” a “treasure,” or sanctuary. A community organizer from South Central in Los Angeles said that CSU LA for him had been an “oasis.” A few months ago in a Sacramento Bee op-ed, a CSU Fresno professor made the same point, calling the university campus “an island of difference,” threatened, he said, by a “rising sea of technologically facilitated sameness.”

Campus values are different from the rest of society. So its methods and social relations are different too.

The liberal arts could not be jettisoned from the university and its autonomy lost without changing what the institution fundamentally is. And minorities and the poor who gained access to a university but no longer found their sensibilities expanded and their horizons widened would still be denied a genuine higher education.

A second fundamental purpose of public higher education in America has been political. The classical thinkers on republics and democracies never thought those systems could exist without educated citizens. In
America, public universities and colleges were seen as places to train those citizens and prepare them for their democratic roles.

I first heard this point made in the plaza. One day a critic of what we activists were doing took the podium and declared that parents sent their kids to college to study, not to do politics. An older student, maybe a grad student, responded, saying that a public education was not just an education funded by the public, but an education that prepared students to be parts of a public—to be citizens. His point was that what we were learning in the plaza was a proper part of the curriculum, indeed a core responsibility of the curriculum.

He was, I later found, on solid footing. People like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin believed that a key purpose of higher education was to help in the formation of a self-governing people. In this civic humanist branch of the tradition, a main goal of liberal arts education was the achievement of civic or public freedom. That tradition had many adherents in the 19th century United States. During the arguments over setting up the College of California (which later became UC Berkeley) in the 1860s, the Reverend Horatio Stebbins urged that a state university was pivotal “to free Republican government.” He argued that “If the state [i.e., the larger political order] imposes duties that require intelligence, it is the office of the state to furnish the means of intelligence…[I]t is for the dignity of the commonwealth.” That was why higher education was made tuition-free in California back in 1868.

Article 9 of the California constitution of 1879, the state’s current constitution, says: “A general diffusion of knowledge and intelligence being essential to the rights and liberties of the people, the Legislature shall encourage by all suitable means the promotion of intellectual, scientific [etc.]…improvement.” It doesn’t say the legislature should do this for career training, or to boost the state’s GDP. It shall do this because it’s “essential to the rights and liberties of the people.”
As late as 1939, the state’s Department of Education identified a main task of the state college system as the “democratization” of higher education. “The state colleges more than any other group of institutions in California,” it said, “face the task of interpreting democracy to the society.”

No wonder the CSU has been called the People’s University.

C. Wright Mills summarized this larger point in the 1950s by saying that, “the prime task of public education, as it came widely to be understood in this country, was politics: to make the citizen more knowledgeable and thus better able to think and judge of public affairs.”

The idea here was not that the political task was supposed to be fulfilled entirely in the classroom. (And the idea was not to politicize the classroom, something I, like most people, object to, having been subjected to it by a few conservative professors in my early years.) Rather, it is a task that’s also begun to be fulfilled over the last half-century in plazas, courtyards, impromptu seminars, and current-affairs panels in the nation’s campuses—in their expanding public spheres.

“Public schools,” as Benjamin Barber puts it, “are not merely schools for the public, … but schools of publicness; institutions where we learn what it means to be a public...” Participation in a public sphere enables students to develop the qualities of mind that help them locate themselves in history and society, help them learn about other histories and societies, and also help prepare them to act to make ours a more just society.

Sproul Plaza was not, then, unique to Berkeley. It represented a function that is now being developed at most colleges and universities. The campus may be, in fact, one of the last training grounds left in the society for teaching students about real public life. The political theorist Martha Nussbaum even suggests that, “one way of assessing any educational scheme is to ask how well it prepares young people for life” in a political system in which “the people inform themselves about crucial issues they will address as voters” and their choices will have an “impact on the lives...
of people who differ from themselves.”

This idea of the university’s larger political role is not just that of a few maverick thinkers. Immanuel Kant acknowledged the university both as a place for learning the liberal arts and for citizenship. “The university [must] contain a faculty that,” he wrote, “… [are] free to evaluate everything, [a faculty that] concerns itself with … truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak out publicly. And a few years ago, Toni Morrison, the Nobel-prize-winning author, in explaining that her teaching was necessarily value-laden, urged that the university needs to “take seriously and rigorously its roles as guardian of wider civic freedoms, as interrogator of … complex ethical problems, [and] as servant and preserver of deeper democratic practices.”

The American university, then, is a place that, by instructing students, supporting its faculty’s teaching and research, and creating lively public spaces, seeks to preserve a democratic politics and provide means for the society to reflect on its past and its possible futures.

A third aspect of the university I’ve thought about in recent years is its historic character as a community. That dates from the medieval idea of a university as “a community of masters and scholars.” Paul Goodman noted in 1963 that it was the last self-governing community in the United States. This community’s form of self-governance is unique. It is a shared governance, with the faculty responsible for curriculum and academics, and the administration, for the business and operations parts of the campus. But it is, optimally, a community of which we are all members, not a bureaucracy or a business firm.

The University is a community not simply by historical accident but by functional necessity. You need a community if students (traditionally regarded as apprentices) in different fields and professions are going to be trained in the practices and standards of all those fields and professions. You need a community to maintain academic freedom, which was created originally by faculty self-governance (not, for example, by the Bill of
Rights). And you need a community to maintain what I’ll call the knowledge commons, around which the university was historically built. The knowledge commons is a place in which the cultural and intellectual wealth of the past is made available, where ideas are freely shared and where ideas also grow by cross-fertilization from many fields.

A commons also entails aspects of a gift economy, like that of the northwest Indian tribes, notably the Kwakiutl—a place knit together by gifts rather than sales, where the highest status goes to those who give the most, and the exchange of gifts enriches the bonds of the community at the same time it provides individuals with what they need. Elements of that kind of economy were still evident in the places I’ve spent my career. Looking back on it, the best things in that career have been gifts—the existence of state universities in the first place, the fact that at the one I attended, Loyalty Oath resisters back in 1949 and 1950 took a stand, many losing their jobs by the act but also providing a courageous example, and a reminder of principle, for our later Free Speech Movement. The professors I serendipitously found, the colleagues whose insights sparked new ideas, the collegiality of my department at CSU Sacramento, have all been gifts—gifts I cannot deny, but I can try to repay.

**Looking back on it, the best things in my career have been gifts—the existence of state universities in the first place...the professors I found, the colleagues whose insights sparked new ideas.**

The university besieged

Today, we know, the university defined by these characteristics is besieged—not just from without, but by theories and organizational redesigns promoted within. These theories and models are taken over largely from the world of business, specifically the asset-stripping, CEO-enriching stage of business in which we find ourselves. In post-War America, capital began to seek its profits by commodifying activities in worlds that had previously lain outside the marketplace: hospitals and medical care, the arts, political campaigns. And we too have become
objects of its affection. Parts of the university do have to be run like a business (facilities maintenance, for example, and food services). But the university as a whole is not a business, and what is exchanged in its classes and seminar rooms are not commodities. Confusion on these scores threatens the fulfillment of all three objectives mentioned above.

Seeing the university in business terms, first and foremost, sidelines the liberal arts and reduces support for the humanities compared, say, to engineering and business administration. It was never the aim of the liberal arts to raise lifetime incomes. But the preface to What Business Wants from Higher Education, published by the American Council on Education, tells us that, “[H]igher education must stand ready to measure institutional performance in terms of the demonstrated learning of our students, particularly in the areas deemed relevant by prospective employers.”

Second, this view of our tasks marginalizes public life and the training of citizens because it is not “relevant to prospective employers.” The new view prefers stage-managed meetings to real public discourse when explanations are required.

And third, the new model tries to supplant the roles and relationships of a community by those of the corporation, calling department chairs “managers,” departments “profit centers,” and students “customers.” Even the word “university” has been dropped from public references to the institution where I work (California State University, Sacramento) in favor of a brand name (“Sac State”) formerly seen mainly on sweatshirts. And where the commercially oriented used to see the campus serving the economy indirectly, by training its workforce, they now see it as a direct site of capital accumulation, with consumer malls, commodified courseware, licensing agreements, and captive markets for information technology systems.

In a community genuinely dedicated, as a community, to higher edu-

**The university as a whole is not a business, and what is exchanged in its classes and seminar rooms are not commodities.**
cation, no manager would accept tens of thousands of dollars of salary increases while the real salaries of those who fulfilled its core mission were being cut. No non-classroom building would be built or auxiliary activities, like athletic programs, maintained undiminished when students had to pay drastically hiked fees (15.5 percent now on top of a 32 percent increase last year—amounting to more than three times the fees students paid in 2000.)\(^{17}\) If it is claimed that the funds for classroom buildings and auxiliary expenditures come out of different accounts, I’d reply that managers who’ve shown the ingenuity many do in moving money around—coming up in the CSU, for example, with a half-billion dollars internally to pay for new management software—could surely find a way to staunch student fee increases or boost faculty salaries if they had a mind to.

If our managers retained an allegiance to the universities’ real purpose, even the current budget cuts might have been weathered without a decline in quality.

If our managers retained an allegiance to the universities’ real purpose, even the current budget cuts might have been weathered without a loss of morale and a decline in educational quality. Without that allegiance, even a restoration of previous funding levels will not rebuild the institution.

We see the signs of the attempted redefinition of the university all around us—in the construction for example, of extraneous building that improve appearances while neglecting our core purposes. Or in requirements to forecast demonstrated outcomes, as if the fruit of silently planted seeds could be added-up ahead of time and harvested tomorrow, and the Groves of Academe estimated as so many board feet of lumber.

We hear the sounds of the attempted shift as new economic terms displace the older educational vocabulary. But students are not customers. And claiming that they are proposes a drastic narrowing of the existing obligations between teachers and them. A salesman sells an item to a customer and the relationship ends. Nothing more is required; and no buyer should expect more. There is no care for the customer’s arts and
powers. Nor any commitment on the customer’s part to master a craft or subject matter, and perhaps be changed in the process. The new term make strangers of people who formerly required mutual trust.

We faculty have also found ourselves mislabeled by this effort, as when we receive “customer surveys” about campus services. I have filed these surveys in the circular file, and hope you will too. Because they are misaddressed. And they are sent by people who don’t know where they are. I am not and never have been a customer on this campus. I’ve been a member of a community, a co-worker in a grand and difficult effort.

Ultimately this new model also has an organizational thrust that would restructure the university. From a business perspective, sharing governance with employees is a recipe for disaster. The long-term bias of the model is therefore to sideline that sharing and reduce the faculty to the status of employees. The new managers would just as soon get rid of academic customs like shared governance, academic autonomy, and, of course, tenure. When CSU Chancellor Reed arrived in 1998, fresh from launching Gulf Coast University in Florida (a campus without tenure) and announced “faculty culture must change,” that’s what he was talking about.

Those who promote a business model of higher education, finally, would wipe out the university’s autonomy and its character as a “sanctuary” or “island of difference” to make it just the same as the rest of the society. Students coming to study here would no longer have the option of experiencing a different culture with deeper values than consumer culture. And that’s perhaps the real tragedy of the proposed shift: that the vision of human nature implicitly transmitted by the campus would no longer be of a nature with depths and facets that need to be developed, but of one driven simply by desires to be quickly met—and an education gained—by the constant purchase of gadgets, online gear, and even life-
styles. You are what you buy. The freedom provided by this vision is the manipulated freedom of the consumer who knows nothing about the options missing from the array of items stocked on the shelves.

There is a politics to this attempted reorganization of the university, but it is not a politics that introduces itself openly in the public space and is eager to argue its case. Rather, it is part of the politics of privatization that has narrowed and degraded California’s public life for the past 30 years. This is the politics that has given our state such things as the lowest adult literacy rate of any state in the nation, reversed much of the progress we’d made toward racial and ethnic equality, and increased class polarization. The privatized university feeds these trends and does nothing to stanch them. It reconceives higher education as no longer a public good paid for by the public but as dependent on family savings (or private wealth); no longer undertaken for Horatio Stebbins’ “dignity of the commonwealth” but for private careers; and no longer occurring within a community but simply at a point of intersecting private itineraries.

If this effort to remake the university is successful, we’ll also see the knowledge commons enclosed and privatized by patent laws, licensing agreements, and rising tuition. You’ll need cash to get to our common patrimony.

FACULTY MUST DRAW THE LINE

This explains the flare-ups and conflicts on the nation’s campuses over the last few years. They are products of the clash between two different visions of higher education and its functions—the older vision that combined personal, political, and professional purposes, and the new, which comes down to a service station model of higher education. It was the first signs of the new mindset and model, I now see, that we ran up against on one campus in the ‘60s. Today the attempt to impose that
model engulfs American academia as a whole.

The contested nature of the current campus poses difficult problems for us that defy pat answers or easy remedies: How do we respond to what are ultimately political threats with a public, rather than an acrimonious, politics, and revive a constructive interplay between the classroom and the plaza? How do we sustain a university-level education in classrooms that are poorly maintained and have twice the number of students (and half the tenured teachers) they should have? How can we remain loyal supporters of our campus, when it puts more emphasis on an expensive gym than on its teaching mission, mixes private and public funds in its foundation accounts, and adds expensive administrators while cutting classes? How can we confidently participate in shared governance when many academic and curricular decisions, which are part of the faculty’s domain, are pre-empted by administrative fiscal decisions?

These are problems for which we lack clear-cut answers. We’ve each had to deal with them in our own way. But in responding to them we cannot avoid upholding one model of the university or the other. Even by doing nothing. “By our silence,” Camus reminded us, “we also take a stand.” I hope the stand will be against this new business and corporate model of education.

If it is not, we will help to work a profound inversion in the functions of the American university. Instead of providing a means for society to appraise its activities in light of larger historical and moral contexts, it will become a means only of glorifying the status quo and of propagandizing students about its beliefs. Instead of offering a means for students to find their own best powers, it will become a tool to guide them into pre-cut occupational slots. And instead of creating conscious citizens the university will produce compliant subjects.

But if it is to be contested, who is to do it? Who will bell the cat? Not the administrators, who nearly all promote the business model. Hopefully...
the students, while they’re here. And the staff. But, I want to suggest, centrally this is a job for the faculty.

Ted Hornback, one of CSU Sacramento’s great gadflies, called them “the core of the university” and stated, “Faculty, as the core of the university, have an obligation to the future.”20 This new model has to be contested to fulfill that obligation, and as part of a larger struggle to restore many public goods in this state. Over the long-term, there is no one else but the faculty to do it. And we must attempt to do this off-campus as well as on. As public educators we have to reeducate the larger public about the purposes of higher education, and the costs of disinvestment in it. We have to reawaken the state’s historic commitment to it.

This will be hard because over the last generation we’ve seen business roundtables, education administrators, and rump parliaments of term-limited legislators take charge of the discussion by recommending such things as distance learning, “reinvention,” the need for “demonstrated outcomes,” and in the CSU system the ludicrous “deliverology,” while we have remained indecisive about our public role and mostly silent. This silence needs to end. We need to become activist professionals, or we will cease to be professionals at all.

Jack Livingston would agree. Back in 1976, in the midst of other troubles, he wrote a campus version of the Declaration of Independence in which he declared it “the right and duty of its faculty to... to [restore] the conditions [necessary] to the life of the mind and the education of a free citizenry.”21 He and others, created a Committee to Support Higher Education, and went out to clubs and churches and meetings with legislators to explain what was going on in the state universities, and what should be going on.

If we don’t believe students are customers, don’t see the university as just a brand but as a living community, and don’t support the privatization

Who will bell the cat?
Not the administrators.
Hopefully the students, while they’re here. And the staff. But, I want to suggest, centrally this is a job for the faculty.
of the People's University, then we're going to have renew their effort—not to escape our job in the classroom but to properly fulfill it.

If we mean to preserve the special character of campus culture, to preserve the campus as a gateway of opportunity rather than a bastion of class privilege, and to preserve for future students the gift our predecessors gave us, then we'll have to join the fray over higher education. The public university is indeed a treasure, the repository of historic hopes and unfinished struggles, which is why it claims our allegiance and further efforts.

ENDNOTES

2. The seven classic liberal arts were: grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music (by which they meant something different from what we do today).
9. ibid, 159.
10. C. Wright Mills, op. cit.
11. “Education for Democracy,” The Good Society: A PEGS Journal, VII (2), Spring 1997, 1, 4. The point is “not that the university has a civic mission, but that the university is a civic mission…” Barber, Aristocracy of Everyone, 14, 222. Also see Henry Giroux, “Neoliberalism, Corporate Culture, and the Promise of Higher Education: The University as a Democratic Public Sphere,” Harvard Educational Review, 72, (4), Winter 2002.
17. Since this talk was delivered, CSU trustees have raised tuition by a staggering 23 percent, making it $6,400 a year, twice what it was in 2007.
18. The authors claim explicitly that “the autonomous culture of higher education” is an atavism, 82.
19. Though an original proponent of the new model, Clark Kerr by the 1995 edition of his book acknowledged that there was “more to a university” than what sells in the market. Where he previously overlooked the need for autonomy, he now erected it into one of the criteria of a healthy university. Uses of the University, 4th ed., 182; 192-193.
20. Vernon Hornback, “Letter to the CSUS Academic Senate,” Jan. 21, 1997. He followed this by saying, “It has been their duty and honor over the centuries to awaken the minds of the nation’s youth, to help them acquire the knowledge and understanding, the questioning and questing habit of mind that marks the critically involved citizen and the educated man and woman.”


WORKS CITED
Preventing Violence or Promulgating Fear? ALEC, the NRA, and Guns on Campus

by Jennifer M. Proffitt and John Wesley White

INTRO BY NEIL GREENBERG

I’m a gun owner. In my rural state, gun ownership is not only the norm, but the expectation. Still, in the wake of Parkland, as debate rages over whether to arm teachers or not, I have to believe that allowing guns on campuses is a prescription for disaster. This article, first published in 2017, describes the special-interest lobbyists working behind the scenes to put guns on campuses. They’ve got money and they’ve got connections. But the authors, who won NEA’s Democracy in Action Prize for their work, describe what staff and faculty unions bring to the table: The collective voice of educators, students, parents, and community members. Read this for a lesson in community organizing and a reminder that solidarity matters.
The euphemism that Florida, the nation’s third most populous and politically powerful state, is a battleground is an apt description—and more than just every four years. Every year, every day in the state’s capital, Florida has become high ground for pro-corporate, special-interest lobbyists who seek to instill a far-right legislative and social agenda, specifically the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and the National Rifle Association (NRA). Armed with seemingly endless cash from their billionaire supporters and a slick but distorted focus on individual rights, and facing a mostly uninformed and unorganized citizenry, the far right has found in Florida the perfect Petri dish for passing self-serving laws. Nowhere is this lopsided ideological battle more evident than in the recent NRA- and ALEC-supported attempts to pass legislation that would allow concealed weapons on the state’s public college and university campuses.

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As faculty and union leaders in Florida’s state universities, we have seen from the front lines how our recent fight against a guns-on-campus movement demonstrates the extent to which many state legislators ignore the will of the experts, the will of almost all affected stakeholders, and, worse yet, the will of the vast majority of their constituents so that they can kowtow to the interests of deep-pocketed lobbyists and campaign contributors. This fight also reveals the retribution that wealthy and powerful interests levy against those who resist even one component of the far right’s wide-reaching agenda. From our vantage point, we also have seen how state legislators’ effort to court favor with the gun industry highlights the broader, right-wing attack on public higher education.

Our part of this cautionary tale began in the fall of 2014 when Florida House Representative Greg Steube and State Senator Greg Evers, both NRA-endorsed Republicans and staunch gun advocates, introduced companion bills (HB 4001 and SB 68) to repeal the state’s ban on firearms on public college and university campuses and prohibit institutions from creating or maintaining policies that in any way discourage the carrying of concealed weapons anywhere on campus (except in places where alcohol is sold and sports stadiums). Steube and Evers, backed by NRA ratings of A and A+ respectively, used almost verbatim the model legislation produced and disseminated by ALEC.

The bills were touted as imperative and inevitable after a November 2014 shooting on the steps of Strozier Library on the Florida State University campus that left three wounded and the shooter killed by police. Ignoring compelling research-based evidence to the contrary (see for example two comprehensive studies on the issue: one by Stanford Law Professor John Donahue and the other by a consortium of faculty at Johns Hopkins), these lawmakers posited that having more armed students would miraculously counter what they portrayed as un-policed and
crime-infested college campuses. Thus, their bills contained no exemptions for such places as university hospitals, counseling centers, dormitories, student unions, etc. Averse to even the appearance of forcing government regulations on private industry, their proposed law would not affect private institutions of higher education. Nor, Ironically, would it alter long-extant bans on concealed weapons in Steube and Evers’ own workplace—the Florida Capitol.

While Republican lawmakers had been unsuccessful in seeing their pro-guns agenda passed in the 2015 legislative session, their 2016 legislative effort, which began in the summer of 2015, launched with new momentum provided by a thinly veiled NRA “grassroots” movement. Two years earlier, the NRA and Florida Carry, a gun rights group that focuses on gun legislation and litigation in Florida, had, in Florida Carry, Inc. and Alexandria Lainez vs. the University of North Florida (2013), won the right to have guns on state university campuses—but only in locked cars. In that case, Florida’s First District Court of Appeals had agreed with Florida Carry’s claim that “UNF had no authority to adopt the regulation in question because the Florida legislature had expressly preempted the entire field of firearms regulation” in the Florida Statutes (790.33(1)).

The university declined to appeal for financial and pragmatic reasons, leaving open the door for further legal and legislative action by gun advocates. Not surprisingly, in 2014, Florida Carry, Inc. filed a new lawsuit (Florida Carry, Inc. vs. University of Florida) that sought to allow students and others to carry concealed guns in campus dorms and other university housing. The plaintiff’s argument in these “campus carry” cases revolved around the notion that public campuses were rife with rapists and would-be mass shooters, and only an armed student body could deter such crimes. Further, students have a right to protect themselves from the “murderers, rapists, terrorists, crazies” running rampant on college cam-
puses, argued Marion Hammer, former NRA president and current NRA lobbyist in Florida.⁸

These arguments would soon be the primary talking points of the most vocal pro-guns on campus advocates: “Florida Students for Concealed Carry.” This group ran a hyperbolic and factually-selective but nonetheless well publicized public relations campaign in favor of the bill. At the time (2015-2016), the group’s website showed it to have eleven student members, all students at Florida State University. Its faculty sponsor was Samuel Staley, director of the DeVoe L. Moore Center—a think tank funded by a Tea Party millionaire “committed to free enterprise.”⁹ Florida Students for Concealed Carry now claims that “As of spring 2012, we have chapters at five major universities in the state with close to 1,000 members.”¹⁰ And though the group claims no affiliation with the NRA, it nonetheless boasts of receiving help and support “from long time advocates like former NRA President Marion Hammer.”¹¹

HYPING FEAR AND IGNORING FACTS

To drum up public support for the guns on campus bills, their sponsors and Florida Students for Concealed Carry embarked on a campaign of false fears and empty promises. First, they claimed mass school shootings were reaching epidemic proportions, and that criminals were already (and illegally) carrying weapons on our campuses. Then, they pivoted to their proposed solution to their invented crisis: armed students in our classrooms would dissuade would-be campus shooters and more quickly end shooting rampages via intervention by armed students. Note that Steube, the House sponsor, was at least consistent in that he also introduced legislation—euphemistically called the “School Safety Bill” (HB 19)—to allow public school teachers, principals, and other school personnel to
carry concealed weapons in Florida’s K-12 schools. At the same time, Steube and Evers also claimed that the bill would cost nothing from the state and its cash-strapped colleges and universities. Their argument was timely in that it coincided with Oregon’s Umpqua Community College shooting and followed by a year the Florida State University library shooting. In a guest editorial to The Gun Writer (2015), Steube first cited John Lott, a champion of the pro-gun movement and former academic whose most notable research (that more guns equal less crime) has been critiqued and discredited, writing: “Umpqua Community College, scene of a recent mass shooting, was yet another gun-free zone. Oregon law allows permitted concealed handguns on university property, but public educators have undermined the law by putting bans in faculty and student handbooks.” Steube then asked his readers, “why would we want to make our colleges and universities in Florida targets for terrorism, murderers and rapists [by disallowing concealed weapons]? This is a rhetorical tactic common to those pushing a far-right agenda: If you’re against them, you must be on the side of terrorists and rapists.

Representing Florida’s public college and state university faculty, the United Faculty of Florida—in concert with the nonprofit Keep Guns Off Campus and the nonpartisan Florida League of Women Voters—took a lead in fighting the gun lobby and helped bring together a heterogeneous association of groups in opposition to guns on campuses: a conglomerate of student union members, faculty union members, faculty senate leaders, state college and university presidents, a vast majority of parents, and campus police chiefs from each of Florida’s state colleges and universities. In letters to state legislators, editorials in local papers, online discussions, and in numerous public forums, the bill’s opponents used facts to discredit the argument that concealed weapons discourage crime or that armed students would lessen the damage wrought by a would-be campus shooter,
or even that students were at great to personal harm on our campuses.\textsuperscript{18} We rebutted their argument that mass school shootings have become epidemic. While any school shooting is one too many (and is unimaginably tragic), national crime statistics clearly show that schools (K-12 and college campuses) are far safer places than their surrounding communities. In addition, national longitudinal data demonstrate that schools today are safer than in the past.\textsuperscript{19} We also rebutted the gun lobby’s claims that more guns would equal more safety by using expert testimony of campus police officers concerned that more guns would lead to more chaos. As Florida State University Police Chief David Perry stated regarding the shooting on his campus, having multiple people with guns “would have exacerbated and made our situation even worse…To have two or three or more people with weapons yelling commands, people firing rounds that can’t be accounted for, that’s just not a good mix.”\textsuperscript{20} With the gun lobby’s false argument outweighed by these facts and by the revelation that some students on the Umpqua campus had been armed but chose not to respond to the shooter there, the bill’s advocates changed their approach.\textsuperscript{21} Replacing the notion that campuses were Wild West-like environments was the claim that our campuses are magnets for rapists who would magically disappear were their victims armed. The gun lobby framed the argument as one in which anyone who fought against guns on campus was anti-woman and pro-rape.\textsuperscript{22}

Once Steube and Evers started using this argument, it gained significant traction via the efforts of Florida Students for Concealed Carry. This small but very vocal group gave the bill’s advocates a significant and powerful voice: that of student victims and potential student victims. The ostensible leader of Students for Concealed Carry, FSU’s Rebekah Hargrove, engaged in a media campaign using the Internet and, more importantly, a serial letter to the editor that was published by newspapers throughout the state.\textsuperscript{23} Stating that “Florida’s proposed ‘campus carry’ legislation…is not only about restoring a constitutional right, it is funda-
mental to the safety of college students, especially women,” Hargrove argued that college campuses are rife with rapists because they ban guns. Ignoring the data showing that Florida’s college and university campuses are exponentially safer places than their surrounding communities while simultaneously citing the true and serious problem of campus rape, Hargrove used hyperbole rather than a meaningful, contextual presentation of the statistical data. She claimed, for instance, that “A college campus is not holy ground that is free from alcohol, drugs, guns, rapists and violent criminals. Rather, as a gun-free-zone, it is a safe-haven for rapists and violent criminals, leaving law-abiding students defenseless.” Absent from Hargrove’s argument was any mention of the fact that most sexual assaults against college students happen off campus, that most on-campus rapes are committed by perpetrators known by the victim and involve alcohol consumption (thereby making weapons all the more dangerous), and that personal weapons are more often used against rather than in defense of their owners.

Hargrove also engaged in a sophomoric but nonetheless popular tactic of the political right: a focus on individual rights as sacrosanct rather than as limited. Citing her Second Amendment rights, Hargrove claimed that “We want the right to defend ourselves…The instant we decided to go and get an education, we lost that right.” Hargrove’s argument rests on her fallacious belief that an individual’s right to carry guns is limitless when, in fact, there are well established limits on our constitutional rights. Similarly, in citing her Second Amendment rights, Hargrove readily ignored the rights of others by suggesting that her personal right to carry a firearm trumps the rights—and stated desires—of the vast majority of her college peers to feel safe in a gun-free environment. Fortunately, despite Hargrove’s successes in getting her views onto the airwaves and into editorial pages, most of the public who heard or read
them were not swayed. Throughout the guns-on-campus debate and its slow but steady passage through various Florida House and Senate committees and subcommittees, public sentiment consistently ran in opposition to pro-gun efforts. In fact, one poll found 73 percent of Floridians opposed the measures.\(^3\) Helping in this regard were public opposition to the bill by student and faculty governments at Florida’s colleges and universities, university presidents and chiefs of police, and the Florida Board of Governors (a group of political appointees—and thus overwhelmingly conservative—that governs the entire state university system): “The State University System and all 12 state universities are united in the belief that Florida should maintain the long-standing Florida law that prohibits concealed weapons on university campuses.”\(^3\) Opposition to the bill was also fueled by the efforts of The Campaign to Keep Guns Off Campus, the Florida League of Women Voters, and public appearances by the authors of this article in local television and radio media.\(^3\) Unfortunately, the views of the public and the stakeholders most affected by the proposed legislation—students, faculty, staff, administrators, and police officers from the state’s public colleges and universities—were largely irrelevant to the NRA- and ALEC-backed and bought legislators who pushed the legislation forward.

**THE LEGISLATIVE FIGHT, THE POWER OF THE NRA, AND A PARTY-LINE VOTE**

Once HB 4001 and SB 62 were introduced, House and Senate leadership assigned them to various subcommittees as part of the bill-vetting process. The fact the bills were put on the legislative agenda was troubling enough, given their rationale was rejected by Florida’s citizens and ran counter to any valid research data. What was worse for faculty and students to witness, however, was the legislation’s steady progress despite

The views of the public and the stakeholders most affected by the proposed legislation were largely irrelevant to the NRA- and ALEC-backed and bought legislators.
overwhelming public and private opposition at each and every committee hearing and in private meetings between citizens and committee members.

The House bill’s first stop was the Criminal Justice Subcommittee, where it passed by a vote of 8 to 5. Interestingly, one of the no votes was voiced by a lifetime NRA member and Republican who was concerned not only about the effects of guns on campuses but also that the bill did not advocate for higher standards for concealed carry holders.34 (Indeed, in Florida, one can use a Groupon to get a concealed carry permit).

The House bill’s second stop was the Higher Education and Workforce Subcommittee, where the authors of this article and others saw its swift promotion through an egregious assault on the democratic process. More than 70 people attended this meeting, reported The Tampa Bay Times, eager to speak against guns on campus.35 However, the first hour and 20 minutes of the two-hour meeting consisted of a panel of five people who discussed, at length, textbook affordability. During this time, the subcommittee chair encouraged questions for the workshop panelists, waited patiently for people to ask questions, and asked many questions of her own. At the conclusion of the panel, the chair added 15 minutes to the meeting, leaving less than an hour for the subcommittee members to debate the critical public-policy issue of guns on campuses, and for dozens of citizens to testify. It was impossible. The people directly affected by the proposed legislation—faculty, staff, students, parents, campus police officers, including many who had traveled across the vast stretch of the state—were told they each had just a minute to speak, and then, as the clock ticked down, only 10 seconds. Meanwhile, legislators also were discouraged from asking questions of the bill sponsor or the speakers, though a few did. Because the chair—a Republican with an A-rating and an endorsement from the NRA—had imposed such constraints on open debate, dozens of people who wanted to speak were silenced altogether. It became clear to us that their testimony wouldn’t have mattered anyway—
the members of the House subcommittee had made up their minds on this life-or-death matter before anyone ever stepped in the room. The bill passed 10 to 3, largely along party lines. (An exception: Rep. Michelle Rehwinkel-Vasilinda, then an NRA A-rated Democrat from a Tallahassee district that includes Florida State University, not only supported the bill but was a co-sponsor. She has since quit the Democratic Party.) The bill then passed the House’s Judiciary Committee by a vote of 13 to 5.

Despite so many varied voices speaking out against the bill, ranging from college students and their parents to Democratic state legislators, the House version nonetheless made it to a floor vote on February 3, 2016, barely a month after its original filing date. It was passed—by the entire House—in yet another largely party-line vote of 80 to 37.

To become law, the legislation depended upon passage of the Senate bill, which got a quick start in the Criminal Justice Committee, chaired by the bill’s Senate sponsor. It passed there by a 3 to 2 vote, along party lines, and then passed the Higher Education Committee by a vote of 5 to 3. Then it hit the Judiciary Committee, a mandatory committee for the bill, where the committee chair, Republican lawmaker Miguel Díaz de la Portilla, a concealed-carry permit holder who had been rated A-plus by the NRA, stopped its progress. After listening to his constituents and examining the data, Díaz de la Portilla refused to hear the bill, saying, “I don’t think this is a Second Amendment issue…I think what we’re talking about here is campus safety and the best way to address that issue.” He went on to note that the proposed legislation “is worse than the disease.”

Were it not for this lone legislator, who also thwarted the guns-on-campus legislation in 2015, the bill would have become law, quickly signed by Republican Gov. Rick Scott, also a NRA A-rated lawmaker. Since then, however, Díaz de la Portilla has paid a steep price. Once a

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It became clear that their testimony wouldn’t have mattered anyway—the members had made up their minds on this life-or-death matter before anyone ever stepped in the room.
friend, now an enemy, the NRA lowered his approval rating to a mere seven percent—the same level as the most progressive Democrat in the Florida Senate—and targeted his 2016 Senate reelection bid. In fliers and emails to de la Portilla’s campaign contributors, the NRA labeled the lawmaker “a traitor,” and a newly-formed anti-Díaz de la Portilla group began a movement to impeach what it labeled a “traitorous, Communist, Anti-American bastard.” In November, he lost his seat to a Democrat. And the new chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee? Florida’s newest state senator, Greg Steube, the author of the House’s guns-on-campus bill.

The relative success of these gun bills—the speed in which they traveled unadulterated through committees, despite citizen sentiment, and their unchallenged momentum until they hit a single stubborn legislator—speak to the power of the NRA and ALEC in conservative states, swing states, and increasingly in traditionally blue states, like Wisconsin and Michigan, where ALEC has increasingly sought influence over state legislatures. In the journey of this guns legislation, we saw that Florida’s NRA and ALEC-backed state legislators were more than willing to ignore their voting constituents to remain in favor with their major financial patrons.

**Our experience shows how well-connected, deep-pocketed special interests can hijack the legislative process in ways that subsume facts, reasoning, and the will of the people.**

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In 2016, lawmakers in 19 states filed bills to allow more guns on our campuses. It’s not just Florida. But our experience is illustrative—and potentially useful to faculty, staff, and their allies—in other states. First, it shows how well-connected, deep-pocketed special interests can hijack the legislative process in ways that subsume facts, reasoning, and even the will of the majority of the populace. The NRA, which has been one of the most powerful lobbying groups at Florida’s capitol for decades, created the political urgency for this legislation. They harnessed their network of
NRA-supported legislators to advocate for the bill. Simultaneously, they created and disseminated overly simplistic narratives that ran contrary to the facts; these narratives, in turn, compelled otherwise wary legislators to action.

Second, this experience shows that in such contexts as those described above, citizen involvement is critical to focusing the argument on factually substantiated claims. Citizen involvement in states like Florida—and in the “post truth” and “alternative facts” era—is increasingly less likely without union involvement. The fight against guns on campus was led not by faculty governments, students, or even those entities lobbying for gun control; it was led by our faculty union. The union provided the essential network of people with a shared mission, with established communication avenues, with allies across the state, and with the resources needed to counter the tremendous power of the gun lobby.

While some gun lobbyists claimed that the guns on campus issue was not a union issue, they ignored the fact that working conditions are the main focus of faculty unions. Nothing could be more critical to working conditions than safe campuses wherein faculty and students can openly engage in difficult and contentious topics.

Individually and collectively, citizens must shape a well-researched and well-communicated narrative that speaks to both fellow citizens and to legislators. Now, more than ever, this means the union. At the same time, legislators need cover from special interests like the NRA. They can get some by heeding the demands of their constituents and by having a comprehensive rationale for their decisions. Third, this case shows that groups outside the legislative bubble, those not entrenched in the inner workings of power, must marshal their own political power to protect lawmakers from retaliation when they choose their constituents’ interests over special interests. Groups sharing a similar goal must come together, organize, and communicate effectively with each other to counter the

\textit{Citizen involvement in states like Florida—and in the “post truth” and “alternative facts” era—is increasingly less likely without union involvement.}
power, money, and influence of ALEC, the NRA, and others of their kind.

The issue today is guns. The issue tomorrow may be the very existence of our public institutions. As wealthy interests expert in lobbying and rich in political power begin to look at higher education as a source for corporate revenue, through the privatization of educational content and the outsourcing of academic research and the products of that research, faculty and their unions must become more organized and more sophisticated in political maneuvering. To be effective against a well-financed onslaught of special interests, we cannot rely on others to make our case for us. University administrators serve at the pleasure of governors and/or politically appointed boards of trustees and are thus constrained in their public battles, and in what they can and cannot say and do (assuming that administrators concur with faculty on these issues). And while union lobbyists fight on our behalf, they are disadvantaged in the vast majority of states with Republican-controlled legislatures where faculty concerns often fall on deaf ears. Faculty must seek allies within and across campuses, across regions, and even across the nation. They must share in each others’ resources. Faculty must also be willing to speak out publicly, even in seemingly hostile environments. This means visiting state legislators, visiting the state house, and speaking out to the media. Our experience shows that even in the so-called battleground of Florida, sensible people are likely to support voices of reason when those voices are informed, impassioned, and backed by evidence.

ENDNOTES

1. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is a far right ‘think tank’ that originated in the 1970s, primarily in opposition to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and laws governing corporate income taxes. Now largely controlled by billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch, ALEC provides “model” conservative and pro-corporate legislation to state houses. For more information, see Mayer’s Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right.

5. Responding to this hypocrisy, Steube filed a bill that would allow guns in meetings of the Legislature. It died in its first committee stop. See Irby, “Sarasota State Rep. Greg Steube Answers Hypocrite Calls by Filing Bill to Allow Guns in Government Meetings.”
7. Per the public statements of John Delaney, president of the University of North Florida (where the second author works).
8. Evans, “Senate Committee Passes Campus Guns Bill on Party Lines.”
10. Zalneraitis, “Welcome to Florida Students for Concealed Carry.”
11. Ibid.
13. This is an inaccurate claim. University of Central Florida Police Chief Richard Beary said concealed carry on campus would cost $1.1 million in the first year. The Association of Florida Colleges estimated a cost of $74 million over three years for the 28 state colleges. See Russon, “Campus-carry Bill Comes with Hefty Price Tag, Schools Say.”
15. National Review article by John Lott, a nationally recognized researcher.
17. See for example, Lakoff, Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think.
18. John Delaney, president of the University of North Florida and former mayor of Jacksonville, Florida, repeatedly used the hypothetical situation of police responding to an “active shooter” situation only to find multiple armed and ununiformed people and thus being unable to know who the perpetrator was.
21. For a list of the facts presented in opposition to the bill, see http://unf-uff.org/guns-on-campus
22. See also Schwarz, “A Bid for Guns on Campuses to Deter Rape.”
23. We say ostensible leader because a) Students for Concealed Carry, Inc. had at that time been newly created and listed only 11 members and b) Hargrove presented herself as its leader but was not even listed amongst those 11 members.
24. Hargrove, “Do You Support Campus Carry or Do You Support Rape?”
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. See, for example, Culp-Ressler, “Rape Survivors Tell the NRA to Stop Speaking for Them.”
28. Williams, “College Students Who Support Campus Carry Want Their Voices Heard.”
29. Even Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia noted that there should be limits on gun ownership. See Rosenthal, “Justice Scalia’s Gun-control Argument.”
30. Student unions at Florida’s state college and state university system overwhelmingly voted in opposition to allowing guns on campus. Similarly, polling on individual campuses revealed widespread opposition to the measure (2:1 against).


32. Hicks, “Florida has Proposed Allowing Concealed Weapons to be Carried on University Campuses.”

33. For more specific information about the fight against guns on campus, see United Faculty of Florida, University of North Florida, Guns on Campus.

34. Dunkelberger, “Local Reps Divided on Campus-Carry Bill.”

35. Clark, “Guns-on-campus Bill Continues to Move Ahead in the Florida House.”

36. Klas and Auslen, “Senate Panel Chairman Says Bill to Open Campuses to Gun Toting Students is Dead.”

37. 24 Spies “Meet the Florida Republican who Single-Handedly Killed Two of the NRA’s Top State Bills.”

38. See Impeach Miguel Diaz de la Portilla.


40. Campaign to Keep Guns Off Campus, State Legislation.

WORKS CITED


‘A World of White and Snowy Scents’: Teaching Whiteness

by Dave Iasevoli

In this article, first published in Thought & Action in 2009, author Dave Iasevoli introduces the idea of white culture as the controlling culture of education to his rural, white, student teachers. They resist — white culture isn’t even recognized as culture, it’s simply regarded as the natural condition of the world. What Iasevoli has to say about teaching diversity in an overwhelmingly white part of the country is vitally important and insightful, but what strikes me as equally pressing in 2018 is this article’s discussion of race as one element of the chasm that exists between urban and rural citizens in our country. After the 2016 election, The Washington Post reported that nationwide, urban voters had moved left, while rural areas voted more Republican (Gamio). Rural populations have increasingly voted against their own economic interests (and unions) in the often-expressed hope of maintaining what they call the “real America” — precisely that homogeneous, rural culture inhabited by Mr. Iasevoli’s students. At a time when some of my own exurban students frequently comment that they are too nervous to go to the “big city” twenty miles away, we need to work on building bridges. As this author recommends, requiring all education students to complete field training in a locale where they find themselves “the other” is one excellent way to begin to address this problem. Engaging in difficult conversations about race and urban/rural culture, such as those relayed in this article, is another way to take action. And if we can approach these conversations with the same kind
“I usedta live in the world,” begins a character in Ntozake Shange’s For Colored Girls, “but then I moved to the North Country.” The “North Country” of the Adirondack Park is just three hours out of New York City, but it resembles lost worlds of hundreds of years past. I knew and loved the region because of camping and hiking trips that began in my 20s, and a recently purchased vacation home within the Adirondack Preserve. My previous world included 25 years of teaching in New York City public and private schools and, later, a career as an English education instructor on such racially-integrated campuses as City University of New York’s Queens College and Columbia University’s Teachers College. Now, I am an assistant professor for SUNY Plattsburgh on its branch campus in Glens Falls, just south of the Adirondack Park. The local folk, those who live here year-round and whose ancestors have lived here all of their lives, joke that I have gone native. My neighbor, a man whose family traces its roots back to this hamlet for more than a century, calls us city people “Hebes.” “I don’t mean any offense, that’s just what we call ‘em.” When I asked Art about the word, he said, “Sure, it’s short for ‘Hebrew,’ ‘Jewish,’ but it ain’t racist. I’m not racist. It just means that most people up here are poor compared to the city people, and most of them are Jewish. So we call ’em’Hebes’ up here.” I stared at him. “We also say ‘chocolate people’ but it ain’t racist. Hell! I even have some Black or half-Black cousins. They understand.”

David Iasevoli received his doctorate in English Education from Columbia University’s Teachers College. He serves as an assistant professor for the State University of New York Plattsburgh and is writing a book that combines the history of educational efforts in New York State prisons with oral histories of incarcerated individuals.

WORK CITED

I want to understand. I want to know more about the appreciation of and respect for pluralities, in places where differences in race and ethnic background are rare. Given the lack of regular and even intimate contact with a variety of peoples, what can we expect? Further, with the de facto separation of races in many rural areas of the United States, what does race mean to a white teacher? I argue here that even when student populations tend to look monochromatic, a teacher’s responsibility is to overcompensate and teach as if their classrooms were integrated. The title of this essay comes from a line in Wallace Stevens’ poem: “Still one would want more, one would need more,/More than a world of white and snowy scents.”

This is my home, now, the North Country, and I wanted to see, during my first semester of classes, if some of the concepts integral to teaching diversity to students in New York City resonated here. For the course “Introduction to Comparative Education,” I assigned Lisa Delpit’s now-classic Other People’s Children, and anticipated that students would take issue with her arguments. They did not disappoint. Most of the 15 teachers in my class complained about Delpit’s “one-note” tirade against white teachers who do not know how to teach Black children. Several labeled Delpit “racist” and two of them recalled their experiences as undergrads in a course where “white guilt” became the true main ingredient of the curriculum for them. These teachers suggested that racism in the U.S. was in its death-throes—that the major battles for civil rights had resulted in fair treatment of students from any background. They were tired of sensitivity workshops and diversity training. We looked at Delpit’s argument that says:

…we should strive to make our teaching force diverse, for teachers who share the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of our increasingly diverse student bodies may serve, along with parents and other community members, to provide insights that might otherwise remain hidden.
Much might remain hidden, indeed, when white teachers work with diverse populations, but much more is bound to remain unearthed and never brought to light when white teachers teach classes that are exclusively white.

We read Delpit’s text in a course on comparative education, which demanded that we explore the childrearing practices and schooling in non-U.S. cultures. But we regularly circled back to our own backyards, vis-à-vis schools in urban settings, such as where I taught for so many years.

The teachers in this class had no trouble with Delpit’s advisory here: “We all interpret behaviors, information, and situations through our own cultural lenses; these lenses operate involuntarily, below the level of conscious awareness.” Yet, they remained antagonistic towards the author’s contention that members of the dominant culture would always suffer from certain shortcomings when they tried to teach Black students. In other words, my class of white teachers agreed that many cultural biases exist that may remain below the surface in our teaching, but they resisted an engagement with the possibility that we—as members of the dominant culture—lacked the ability to teach other people’s children with empathy.

In her discussion of *Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Toni Morrison writes of an “association of Blackness with strangeness, with taboo; it is something whites can appropriate, because it’s the one thing they lack. Whiteness is a deficiency.” I wonder about white teachers’ perceptions about their own race as a deficiency. In our class on comparative education, I asked the teachers to imagine these different discourses: you are the one white person in a roomful of Black students; you are the one Black person in a roomful of white students. I asked them to write about their pedagogy in these hypothetical situations—what would you do differently, if anything? All of these teachers were flummoxed; they had never before considered such situations. Most of them started to respond that they would not do anything differently—that kids are kids, no matter their race. So, clearly, they took stances opposed to Delpit’s.

*Imagine you are the one white person in a room of Black students, or you are the one Black person in a roomful of white students. What would you do?*
Then, nearly half the class began to talk more discursively about the necessity of acknowledging differences. One woman said, “Listen, I know that a class full of Black kids is going to look on me here as a hillbilly—a redneck, even. ‘You listen to country?’ one kid asked me once. Yeah, I like country, and that labels me a redneck to most Black people.” We entered into a free discussion about white stereotypes: we can’t dance, no rhythm, we all ride tractors (!), bland food, rich, we spoil our children, everything comes easy. This discussion threatened to become a kind of rant, when one student (bless her soul), brought Delpit back into the picture, by citing one of her aspects of power: “The culture of the school is based on the culture of the upper and middle classes—of those in power.”

This teacher pointed out that no matter who voices stereotypes about whom, whites still occupy the central positions of power in this nation. In our next session, I brought in one of the recommended readings for the course, Kozol’s *The Shame of the Nation.* I wanted these students to dwell within the shocking subtitle for a spell: *The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America.* “Apartheid” remains one of those trigger words that always hits hard. Throughout this work, Kozol argues that in the half-decade since *Brown v. Board of Education*, our nation and our dominant culture have given up on the integration of schools: “Segregation, rarely discussed, scarcely even acknowledged by elected officials and school leaders … is incompatible with the healthy functioning of a multiracial society.”

At the time, the possibility of electing a Black president seemed remote, at best. Obama’s star had just begun to rise, and only a few of the students knew his name at the start of the course. Some students pointed to the successes of charter schools in Washington and Philadelphia (where Delpit taught), and Black students’ improved standardized test scores. Kozol addresses this phenomenon:

*This teacher pointed out that no matter who voices stereotypes about whom, whites still occupy the central positions of power in this nation.*
“Even many Black leaders ... have given up on integration. ... They argue 
’a Black child does not need white classmates in order to learn.’ So educa-
tion policies ... ‘now aim to raise scores in [the] schools that Black children 
attend. ... That effort will be flawed even if it succeeds.’ The 1954 decision 
... ‘was not about raising scores for children of minorities but about giving 
Black children access to majority culture, so they could negotiate it more 
confidently.’”

Every one of the 15 teachers here had heard of Dave Chappelle. Two of 
them had avidly watched his show.

One woman brought up access to minority culture—and the 
co-existence of hip-hop alongside country music in Upstate New 
York. We discussed the lack of a two-way street here: just because 
many whites embrace elements of Black culture does not mean that 
Blacks have access to the privileges of the dominant culture. Nonetheless, the majority of teachers in this 
course insisted that separate did not necessarily mean unequal. I suggest-
ed that integrated classrooms, however difficult to teach and reach every 
student, meant better classrooms.

Every one of the 15 teachers here had heard of Dave Chappelle. Two of 
them, including the woman who liked country music, had avidly 
watched his show. I warned the class that Chappelle was strong stuff, and 
offered them the opportunity to leave. All stayed in the room. I showed a 
segment, about a blind, old, racist man, “Clayton Bigsby,” who counts 
himself a member of the Ku Klux Klan, as a “Blackwhite-supremacist”— 
and who does not know that he himself is Black. On his way to a book 
signing, Bigsby’s car stops at a light. AMustang convertible pulls up 
alongside, with a trio of young white men listening to rap. Bigsby express-
es his outrage: “Why’n’t you jungle-bunnies turn that music off! Niggers 
make me sick! Woogie-boogie niggers!” The young white man in the 
driver’s seat asks his buddy, “Did he just call us ‘niggers’?... Awesome!” He 
exclaims exultantly that a Black man “sees” them as niggers, and the two 
men in the front seats exchange power punches. The teachers in my class 
laughed at this; then one woman’s voice rose above the laughter. “It’s not
funny—it’s true.” I suggested that it can be both. We have to laugh at hate speech rooted in ignorance but we have to teach how to end it, too.

Another attempt to integrate the North Country appeals to me. I signed up to become a member of the local volunteer fire department as soon as I moved here permanently. My hope is to alter at least a few perceptions on the part of the year-rounders that city people have no interest in the day-to-day life of the community. In one session, about knots and ropes, the instructor took us through tying figure eights, Becket bends, and bowlines. We students held up this last knot for the instructor’s inspection. As he made his way around the tables, we noticed the same phenomena: there were nearly 30 nooses dangling around the room. “When do we learn the hangman’s noose?” a student queried. “No hangman’s nooses,” responded our teacher. “That’ll get you kicked out of this class. That’s one thing that is outlawed by all the fire departments.” He paused. He had the class’ attention. “Hangman’s nooses caused a lot of trouble for fire departments.” I sensed a collective wink move through the classroom; this might have been my imagination. But in the subsequent session, during a lecture about forcible entry into burning structures, the instructor alluded to a section of Glens Falls that is populated mostly by Blacks and Latinos: “Always exercise caution once you get the door open. You never know what you’re gonna find inside. You know what I mean. Those people ….” He shook his head. The class nodded.

During a discussion in my class about poor urban students’ experiences with the penal system, I posed the question, “Could this happen up here?” One student responded, “It’s already happening! Those people bring their ways up here—there’s drugs all over Glens Falls!” A silence ensued. I considered the imperative to push the student to state explicitly what he meant by “those people,” but I did not say anything. No one did. We all knew what he was saying.

Two words can kill any possibility of understanding between us: you people. When I taught for two years on Rikers Island, New York City’s
jail facility, I learned within a few days about the damage these words can create. I wanted to assign homework to a small group of English/language arts students, and tried to joke about the inappropriateness of “home” in this setting. “You people cannot do homework, of course, so what shall we call this?” One student suggested simply “work,” but another, Jamal, just repeated “you people.” Then there was silence. ‘‘You people.’ I hate that! My grandmother always used to tell me about white people calling her ‘you people.’ She right. Honkies still call us ‘you people.’” I tried to back-pedal, too late. Jamal forced me to realize that these words crush—they epitomize the dynamic of master-slave relations.

In the jail, the students, predominantly Black and Latino, made me conscious of my whiteness, even though my paternal grandfather, I learned in early middle age, came out of Morocco to marry a Southern Italian woman. Color and race rest uneasily upon a relative spectrum. On Rikers Island, the field accentuated my whiteness. There was no way around this facticity, even when students remarked that I could “talk Black.” In the North Country, the extremewhiteness of the field makes me, a city person, a darker brother, at best.

So, you may wonder, why remain in this strange land? I could try to wax poetic about the stark beauties of the Adirondacks, its quiet and smells and serious winters—a world of snow for at least five months. Instead, I’ll point to the challenge of teaching teachers here, where we flub and fluff in our discussions about “multi-culturalism and diversity” because there is so little diversity of backgrounds. And I suggest that just this challenge counts as the most central axis upon which genuine change—improvements—can occur in our schools.

There is no magic about teaching this relativity, the field-dependency of race and background. How long now have we known that the lack of experience with pluralism leads to closed minds? So what has changed in day-to-day interactions? More pertinently: what has changed in diversity courses?

Two words can kill any possibility of understanding between us: you people. They epitomize the dynamic of master–slave relations.
Delpit points to the growing culture clash in urban schools—more new teachers are white, whereas greater proportions of the students are Black and Latino. This phenomenon may not occur in the North Country, nor in most rural areas of the nation, for many decades hence, but there are some signs of change. I suggest that all upcoming teachers, from all backgrounds, should be required to complete at least one field-work experience, or student-teaching placement, in a classroom where they will be the other.

I refute those teachers’ insistence that the wars against racist practices, particularly against Blacks, have ended.

When Barack Obama neared securing the nomination of his party, my neighbor Art and I discussed his prospects. “I tell you, if he gets elected, he won’t last one month.” I knew where Art was going with this, and I remained mute. “Someone will take him out. I swear to you, there are some guys up here—they won’t stand for a Black president.” These words, these sentiments, these calcified prejudices, still chill the mind. “Not me,” he added after a beat, “I am not racist.” He is not alone in his limited vision of the United States, the segregated version. You have to wonder who taught him, back in the day.

ENDNOTES

1. Shange, *For Colored Girls who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf*.
2. All names have been changed.
5. Ibid., 181.
6. Ibid., 151.
8. See note 4 above, 25.
10. Ibid., 20.
12. The Dave Chappelle Show, “Frontline: Clayton Bigsby.”

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


How Do We Stop It?
Strategies for Pushing Back Corporate U.

by David Bordelon

INTRO BY DAVE IASEVOLI

“Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine.”
— HENRY DAVID THOREAU, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Every faculty member needs to read this, and reread this, and read it outside and inside the offices of administration on her/his university campus. Bordelon reasons, with passion and precision, about our need to fight back against the forces of management and corporatization that have besieged the Academy. He provides pragmatic suggestions for not merely resisting the business-model of education, but for beating back the Bottom-Liners. His suggestions demand “information, communication, and determination” in order for us to show the public that we work with students—and not “stakeholders” or consumers—to deepen the wells of knowledge necessary to realize the USA’s democratic ideals.
The thought on many an academic’s mind today is how to stop it. The “it”? The barrage of reports, papers, and interviews stating that higher education needs to embrace “disruptive change,” treat students like customers, and become more entrepreneurial. In short, colleges must adopt a business model, or like blacksmith shops in the age of automobiles, find themselves mere curios, quaint but outmoded heritage industries. This attack comes from all quarters: government, think tanks, even from within the academy itself.¹

The response of academics generally takes two paths: indignation or resignation. Just read the online comments after one of Thomas Friedman’s op-ed takedowns of higher education, “Revolution Hits the Universities,” or the latest Chronicle of Higher Education effusion patiently explaining how “How Disruption Can Help Colleges Thrive,” to see the richness and depth of academics’ critique of flawed arguments.² The problem is we’re fighting a rearguard battle, trying to argue rationally where an ideology of “business first” already has been established. And with papers to grade, research to complete, and articles to write, we end up complaining to each other in the hallways, sighing and shrugging, and then getting back to the real work of academia. In the meantime, “it” rolls on, powered by think tanks, policy wonks, and college administrators with time to kill.

But as the ranks of full-time faculty steadily shrink, and the ranks of

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adjuncts and administrators rise, it’s clear that inaction will lead to a race to the bottom. And no one wants to be the last professor cast out of Corporate U.

So what’s the plan? How can faculty stem the “business as usual” tide that permeates so much of the discourse in higher education today?

What follows are a series of suggestions gleaned from research on higher education trends, education, and psychology. Most will be familiar—they are things academics know we should do. Collected together they seem less formidable: a way to shift from a shrug to action. And that is what is needed now: action. The suggestions that follow can be grouped into three broad, easy-to-recall categories: (1) information, (2) communication, (3) determination.

INFORMATION

Public discussion about the future of higher education abounds with confusions of purpose, faulty cause and effect, straw men arguments, and false analogies. What’s needed is specific, accurate information to reshape a mental landscape that has been distorted with the discourse and mental armature of the corporate world. “Credentialing.” “Silos.” “Stakeholders.” “Branding.” This is what now passes as cogent thinking about higher education. Oddly, despite the recent track record of business in America, these metaphors have somehow captured the imagination of many interested in post-secondary education. While it’s easy for academics to dismiss this as the blather of business, the words used to frame discussions about college matter because, as Neil Postman observed in his prescient The End of Education, “A metaphor is not an ornament. It is an organ of perception.” The ramifications for education are many. As Postman suggests, “Are [students] patients to be cared for? Troops to be disciplined? Sons and daughters to be nurtured? Personnel to be trained? Resources to be developed?” Given the entrepreneurial bent of the actors currently strutting on the higher education stage, it’s clear they believe students are
resources to be exploited: walking wallets. Luckily for academics—and students—the most common arguments invoked to describe college as a business can be easily refuted.

**Information: Delivery v. Education**

Delivery of content and education are not the same thing, and yet their conflation forms the basis of many misperceptions in higher education today. For example, *The Chronicle*’s Jeffery Selingo argues in *College Unbound* that the core purpose of college is “information delivery.” Disproving this canard entails a simple explanation of the difference between delivery and learning. Yes, information can be “delivered,” but multiple modes of information isn’t new at all: remember lectures, books, tele-courses, and the Great Courses audio and DVD series? If delivery was truly at the core of education, Gutenberg nailed the coffin shut on innovation in the 15th century. Print, whether on paper or pixels, can easily provide much of the information delivered on campus.

The problem with Selingo’s argument is that the purpose of college is education, and actual education doesn’t occur on the page or online. It’s what students do with information that results in “higher” learning. What skills do they develop? Can they take existing information and make it into something new? Noam Chomsky offers a challenge to the ideology of education as content, noting that the purpose of college isn’t “to pour information into somebody’s head which will then leak out.” Instead it should “enable [students] to become creative, independent people who can find excitement in discovery and creation and creativity at whatever level or in whatever domain their interests carry them.” The true “disruption” isn’t education itself, it’s in how material and instruction can be presented.

Exhibit A in the confusion between delivery and education are massive, open, online courses, or MOOCs. With their elimination of pesky faculty and emphasis on a star system of professors (think Harvard, think...
branding), MOOCs best represent the latest iteration of Corporate U. Pro-business pundits such as Friedman, with his usual breathless ardor, write that “nothing has more potential to enable us to reimagine higher education than the massive open online course, or MOOC, platforms that are being developed by the likes of Stanford and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and companies like Coursera and Udacity.”

Given his embrace of all things entrepreneurial, it’s no surprise that Selingo, who like Friedman believes that “American higher education has lost its way,” sees MOOCs as the “turning point” in the current “revolution” sweeping higher ed. In the summer of 2011, Teresa Sullivan, president of the University of Virginia, discovered the hard way the revolutionary power MOOCs hold over the unenlightened. Her board of trustees fell under the sway of Freidman’s gospel of technology and forced her to resign because they felt she wasn’t moving quickly enough to join the open course bandwagon with Harvard and Stanford. But those preaching the MOOC gospel have been presented with evidence that theirs is a false god. The latest data from the MOOC Research Initiative, a Bill and Melinda Gates cheering squad for all things MOOC, shows that from student persistence to academic quality, they fail to live up to their hype.

The acolytes of the tech gods seem to forget that a major part of education involves feedback from people with a deep understanding of the field of knowledge under discussion. And who will provide this feedback? Who will stand in the labs, showing students the subtle differences between a *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and a *Pseudomonas fluorescens*? Or sit in an office patiently explaining why a more specific example from *The Things They Carried* is needed to show that it is really a love story? Or provide suggestions on the draft of an essay weighing the differences between the Chicago and behavioral school economists? That’s where the carbon-based delivery system—a teacher—comes in.


Information: Students are not Customers

More than 10 years ago, West Virginia’s Higher Education Chancellor J. Michael Mullen voiced the concern of the business-minded: “But if institutions don’t treat students as customers, it’s possible that they’ll take their nickels and dimes somewhere else.” This idea, that students are consumers, not learners, has become one of the most pernicious aspects of the businessification of higher education. It reduces the faculty/student relationship to the profit motive. One obvious problem with this logic is that there are many other models to adopt. Why not an apprentice model? An intern model? Or the teacher/student model which has existed for ages?

At its most basic level, the customer analogy doesn’t work. Students don’t buy credits; they earn them. Education is not a simple transaction.

At its most basic level, the customer analogy doesn’t work. Students don’t buy credits; they earn them. Education is not a simple transaction. Learning is a complicated mental and physical process involving information, demonstration of skills, feedback, persistence, assessment, and mental change, most of which is intangible. No matter how hard businesses try, it cannot be placed in a shopping bag or online cart. Yes, it can be paid for, but that still doesn’t make students customers. Instead it signals a desire on the part of students to enter the world of academics, a place where the “customer” is explicitly not always right. Indeed, that realization is an important part of the learning process.

And realistically, do students really want to be treated like customers by their professors? Do they want a “would you like fries with that?” mentality governing their education? To reduce students to customers is to reduce education to a cash transaction. Should colleges and faculty treat students as dollar signs or as people interested in learning and mental growth? We can point to the recent catastrophe of the financial industry to see how “clients” or “customers” are treated when they are viewed, to borrow the words of Chancellor Mullen, as so many “nickels and dimes.”
Information: Education is not a Commodity

Closely connected to the student-as-customer fallacy is the notion that education is a commodity, like pork bellies or wheat futures. This fits nicely into a corporate model where student learning is just like any other product, something to be quantified, packaged, and then sold at a profit. This confusion is understandable. Books are a commodity. Classrooms are a commodity. Laptops are a commodity. Even the labor of teaching is a kind of commodity. All of these contribute to learning, but they are not education itself.

The hope of entrepreneurs is that education can be commodified and packaged into an online pellet, much like Willy Wonka’s dream of a meal in a pill. For them, it’s all about monetizing: start with an initial investment, and then sit back and wait for high returns to a small group of investors. This dream is coming to fruition through the efforts of publishers such as Pearson and Kaplan, who offer packages of “modules” designed to “teach” students.\(^\text{15}\) A market cycle is created when these “products” are then proselytized in advertisements masquerading as scholarship.\(^\text{16}\) But higher learning is not an MP3 file or a bit or pixel. Yes, students can register and pay online for a course; yes, they can get “content” online, but because a life of the mind is ephemeral, education cannot be transferred and sold to the highest bidder. While the actual desire for education is subject to the laws of supply and demand and income (is there an opening at College X? Can I afford the tuition?), education itself is determined and limited by factors such as individual interests, skills, and temperament, and thus doesn’t lend itself easily to a symbol to be tracked on the Dow ticker. Of course the University of Phoenix’s profits can be tracked and reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, but again, that’s the business side of education, not education itself.
Information: Follow the Money

The real disruption at play here is economic. While politicians and others preach the importance of higher education and worry about America’s ability to compete in global markets, they don’t want to pay for it. In 2008, for instance, the chancellor of the University of Tennessee proposed that the state’s higher education institutions adopt a “business model” to compensate for a “projected 20 percent cut in state funding.”

The disruptive force here involved the elimination of teachers from the educational model; students willing to “work online with no direct support from a faculty member” would receive a tuition discount. Eliminating the teacher from the course, however, is merely a symptom of the larger social disease: the problem is less a crisis of funding than of priority. While the public clamors for college for all, it balks at the costs such an effort entails.

The math is clear: between 1985 and 2010, the ratio of funds for public institutions was reversed, with state or public funds dropping from two- to one-third of institutional revenues, while tuition rose from one- to two-thirds.

The calls among college trustees and administrators for a business model follow a predictable pattern; the people leading the charge are seldom those providing (teachers) or receiving (students) the education. Trustees, often chosen from the ranks of successful business people in the hope of donational largesse, are more enamored with the pages of the Wall Street Journal than the New York Review of Books. For example, the board that orchestrated the ouster of Teresa Sullivan, headed by real estate developer Helen Dragas, resorted to business-speak to describe the problem at the University of Virginia: it needed “systemic restructuring,” code words for firing people and bringing in new bodies. More generally, they are often connected to pro-business think tanks or political parties that stand to gain from a pro-business approach. Benjamin Ginsberg reports...
that some board members “make insider deals in which the institution purchases goods, services, or property from companies linked to their board members.” As such, they stand to financially benefit by diverting some of the funds from the cash cow that is higher education into their own coffers. This worship of business ideology, and its concomitant love of management, leads to a trickle-down effect on campuses, which are now awash with consultants, administrators, and support staff. The New England Center for Investigative Journalism recently published a report that provides a number to a phenomena most of us have noticed on campuses: administrative and professional staff levels have increased by more than half over the last 25 years. This is all at the expense of faculty, the personnel with whom students have the most contact.

A more direct point to address is the shift from full- to part-time teachers. In 1975, part-timers made up 43.2 percent of faculty; by 2011, the number was 70.2 percent. And the word choice is important here: part-time, not contingent. Teachers, not faculty. This more direct language communicates more clearly to the public what is at stake: time and teaching. Do students want teachers who are harried and running from school to school trying to patch together a lower-middle class life? Or do they want a stable, engaged faculty interested in maintaining long-term contact with them? Do employers and taxpayers want teachers who are “incentivized” to please students with an “easy A” due to fear of non-renewal? Or do they want tenured full-time faculty who are free to provide an academically rigorous education?

These questions all point to the damage visited upon colleges when an education based on money instead of instruction is the rule. Caveat emptor; indeed.

The worship of business ideology, and its concomitant love of management, leads to a trickle-down effect on campuses...
COMMUNICATION

While this pool of information is helpful, faculty can’t just talk to themselves. Communication with the public is the necessary next step. Unfortunately, there’s an established narrative peddled by media darlings such as ex-Washington D.C. School Chancellor Michelle Rhee and the various anti-union groups associated with the billionaire, right-wing Koch brothers. Their message boils down to a slogan ready-made for a public looking for someone to blame: education in American sucks because teachers have too much power. They suggest it’s time to clean up Dodge and treat it like any other industry: “Let the experts take over and all will be well.” Unsurprisingly, their “experts” tout a corporate agenda.

But this default turn to “business as savior” provides a weakness that can be readily exploited. Working to our advantage is the public respect—alone, it appears, among major institutions—that higher education possesses. A 2011 Lumina/Gallup poll found that 70 percent of Americans are satisfied with the “quality of American colleges and universities.”26 In the same year, a Gallup survey on confidence found that “Big Business” could only muster a 19 percent approval rating.27 Obviously, those fighting Corporate U. would have a willing audience. What should we say to them? For starters, we need to expose the fallacies regarding education and business (noted above), and then connect them to the lack of trust in corporations.

Here we can borrow a lesson from the masters of coercive messaging and branding: corporate America. But this poses an immediate problem. How to get a group of people trained to think independently—the professoriate—to present the cohesive front necessary for a messaging campaign? One way is to appeal to our innate desire to educate. The public has been sold a false bill of goods, providing us with a “teaching moment.” How to address this moment, as academics are well aware, varies depending on the audience. For campus consumption, the Princeton economist Daniel Kahneman offers a dense but cogent discourse. His language, and

the theories behind it, including “affect heuristic,” “availability cascade,” and “planning fallacy,” are drawn from a wealth of cognitive research, and can be used to combat the errors in the college-is-failing-so-we-need-to-turn-to-business-for-help line of thinking.  

For the general public, frame the issue by appealing to prevailing anxieties about stagnant wages for workers (the 99 percent), rising salaries for administrators (the 1 percent), and the exploitation of students who pay full tuition for part-time workers. As noted earlier, words matter. Workers. Teachers. Students. Overpaid administrators. Out-of-touch trustees. Full time. Part time. Profit motive. These words and phrases can move the debate, making it part of the growing discontent with the corporatization of America.

But directly refuting the party lines—delivery is not education; students are not consumers; education is not a commodity; beware of corporate influence—is not enough. What we need is a narrative shift from a disruptive to academic view of higher education. This shift is crucial because it negates the caricature of faculty as out of touch and motivated by mere self-interest. Faculty must focus on what they understand: education. To that end, Andrew Delbanco provides a list of the “qualities of mind” which can serve as a template for a more positive, less defensive narrative on the meaning and purpose of college. He writes that it should provide:

A skeptical discontent with the present, informed by a sense of the past.
The ability to make connections among seemingly disparate phenomena.
Appreciation of the natural world, enhanced by knowledge of science and the arts.
A willingness to imagine experience from perspectives other than one’s own.
A sense of ethical responsibility.

While this can—and will—be amended by individual faculty, such a list should be part of an academic’s rhetorical arsenal. Its appeal lies in its inviolability: who would disagree with any of these ideas? And that is what is needed, an endorsement of an authentic college education, with its compassion and rigor intact, unmediated by the profit motive.
Of course digital media provides a ready and inexpensive platform for dissemination of these ideas. A website with a collection of budget documents from specific schools detailing the millions of dollars spent on consultants, administrative salaries, and retreats can open the eyes of taxpayers ready to pounce on fiscal mismanagement. Blog posts, tweets, or letters to the editor can provide an intelligent and sustained counter narrative to the prevailing gospel of disruption, and spread the good word about the need for genuine higher education. With an emphasis on the positive, faculty can explain how a business-first agenda is antithetical to true education. And if trustees turn a deaf ear to faculty concerns, go right up the food chain to local, state, and federal government officials, with appropriately pitched messages to each. While trustees may not listen to faculty, they do respond to political pressure: faculty need to start pressing the appropriate buttons.

More direct action can help as well. Picket lines remain an effective way to get media attention: video loves a protest. The key is to remain on message. For this kind of action, designed for public consumption, participants should agree and prepare two or three talking points—and be ready to direct journalists or potential allies to websites with additional information. Collecting e-mail addresses, Twitter accounts, and mobile phone numbers for text blasts can expand communication networks beyond the confines of a campus. Students are often interested in pushing back against corporate agendas as well. At UVA, students protested Sullivan’s ouster by spray painting G-R-E-E-D on the colonial-era columns of the rotunda.31 For a nation in thrall of spectacle, such actions are tailor-made to focus attention, and once attention is gained, faculty can do what they do best: instruct.
DETERMINATION

But to be blunt, we face a long haul. Faculty now find themselves tasked with explaining the reality of college education to an audience conditioned to accept a myth. At times this will seem like a Sisyphean ordeal. We must prepare to be discouraged and to lose many battles but, also, ultimately to win the war. (Given how beleaguered most faculty feel, military metaphors are inevitable). Those who see college as a business have one thing in their favor: money, and the time and energy it can buy. They can write (or more likely, hire ghostwriters to write) propagandist reports, shift funding, attend meetings and retreats with like-minded people, all to further their agenda. Meanwhile, those who actually do the “business” of college are too busy preparing lessons, keeping abreast of the latest research, grading papers, or teaching in a classroom to explain the obvious: college exists for the education of students, not the predations of business.

Yet there are victories we should celebrate and look to for instruction. President Sullivan’s victory over the UVA board is a sign that, with a united front, the rush for corporatization can be stemmed, and more thoughtful and measured thinking about college administration and instruction can be maintained. A number of recent editorials in the New York Times criticizing the rise of administration and the growth of part-time faculty demonstrate that the problems of “it” are no longer solely the province of campus hallway conversations.32

Faculty need to add their voices to the long continuum of American resistance to domination by the powerful. We need to follow the example of that icon of prickly intelligence, Henry David Thoreau, whose “Civil Disobedience” offers a philosophy well-suited to the avocational nature of teaching: “Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine.”33

Yes, it’s time to apply counter friction. It’s time to stop it.

ENDNOTES

1. Cf. “A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education,” a report from the Bush administration’s Secretary of Education Margaret Spelling, Obama’s various “Race to the Top” initiatives, and from the academy, Christensen and Eyring The Innovative University: Changing the DNA of Higher Education from the Inside Out.

2. For Friedman, the disruption is centered around online course delivery. In addition to “Revolution,” see his “Come the Revolution,” “Breakfast Before the MOOC,”” and “The Professors’ Big Stage.” Christensen and Horn, “How Disruption Can Help Colleges Thrive.” For an excellent rebuttal of the change agenda, see Lepore, “The Disruption Machine.”
3. Contingent faculty made up 75.5 percent of the total in 2009. See “A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members,” The Coalition on the Academic Workforce. For administrators, see Marcus, “New Analysis Shows Problematic Boom In Higher Ed Administrators.”

4. The recent track record is best exemplified by the 2008 banking crisis and resistance to any regulatory change that could prevent it from occurring again.


6. Ibid., p. 145.


9. Ibid.


11. Selingo, College Unbound.

12. Rice, “Anatomy of a Campus Coup.” After pressure from both within and without the university, they rehired her.

13. Straumsheim, “Confirming the MOOC Myth.”


15. Pianko and Jarrett, “Early Days of a Growing Trend: Nonprofit/For-Profit Academic Partnerships in Higher Education.” Game Changers: Education and Information Technologies, in which this essay appears, is published by Educause “with generous support from Ellucian” (n.p.), seems less a rigorous, peer reviewed examination of an issue than a 402 page puff piece for various companies to shill their digital wares. Ellucian, an IT provider for many colleges, promises to “deliver a broad portfolio of technology solutions, developed in collaboration with a global education community, and provide strategic guidance to help education institutions of all kinds navigate change, achieve greater transparency, and drive efficiencies” (“About”). See also Pearson’s advertisement “Online.” Tellingly, this is from a section aimed at “Academic Executives,” not faculty.

16. Game Changers is emblematic of similar collections that offer a way for IT staff (along with a few faculty converts) to gain academic credibility by “publishing” the work they are paid to do, often in conjunction (and sometimes funded by) the very corporate entity they are praising. More ominously, given its placement in The Chronicle (a supposedly more objective venue), consider “Disruption is Good,” an “essay” with the caveat “Information provided by Canvas by Instructure,” praising technology as a kind of digital Shiva: both destroyer and creator. Is it an advertisement? An essay? The Chronicle web site keeps it ambiguous. These incursions into “scholarly” publications suggest how deeply corporate propaganda has infiltrated higher education.

17. Quoted in Benjamin Ginsberg, The Fall of the Faculty.

18. Ibid.

19. For an excellent overview on the negative feedback cycle of politics, economics, and higher education, see Fischer and Stripling “An Era of Neglect.”

20. Rampell, “Where the Jobs Are, the Training May Not Be.”


22. Ginsberg, The Fall of the Faculty.


25. For a review of the literature on the effectiveness of part time teachers, see Ochoa “Contingent Faculty: Helping Or Harming Students?”

27. “Confidence in Institutions,” Gallup.

29. For an amusing example of this view, see Schram, “Ivory Tower Eggheads to Monitor Stop and Frisk.” The article reports on a judicial decision ordering academic oversight of New York City’s Stop and Frisk policy. The title photo—a bespectacled and befuddled looking man in a suit and mortar board hat—and opening line, “A panel of 13 Ivory Tower eggheads,” are caricatures in themselves.

30. Delbanco, *College: What it is, was, and should be*.

32. Cf. the editorials “The New College Campus,” “The Trouble with Online College,” and Lewin’s “After Setbacks, Online Courses Are Rethought.” Lepore’s “The Disruption Machine,” *op cit*, is another recent push back against “it.”


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