7 Ways of Learning

NEA President Lily E. García speaks to higher ed

Let’s get Degrees Not Debt for all students

Meet the 10 worst governors in the U.S.

Can you get fired for saying “back-stabbing sneak?”
DEGREES NOT DEBT
Americans are struggling under a staggering amount of student debt. Can you help?

THRIVING IN ACADEME
Find out how to facilitate the seven ways of learning.

WHY I VOTED YES
Why staff at Harris-Stowe State University formed a union.

BY THE NUMBERS
Meet the 10 worst governors in the nation.

THOUGHT & ACTION
A cautionary tale from the state of Kansas.

THE 2-MINUTE INTERVIEW
Hear more from NEA President Lily Eskelsen on higher education.

STATE OF HIGHER ED
Welcome to the Logan College professional staff!

NEA becomes first major union to be led by three women of color

LILY E. GARCÍA won overwhelming approval from NEA Representative Assembly delegates this July in her election to a three-year term as NEA president. At the same time, delegates also elected Becky Pringle as vice president, making her one of the highest ranking African-American women in the labor movement, and Princess Moss as secretary-treasurer. García, a former Utah teacher of the year, promised to provide a platform for educators to fight for their students: “We know what is at stake and it is why we are who we are,” she said. “It is why we are fearless and why we will not be silent when people who for their own profit and political posture subvert words like ‘reform’ or ‘accountability.’” The new leadership team took the helm on September 1. (To learn more about García’s thoughts on higher education, check out the “2-Minute Interview” on page 13 of this issue!)

Higher education heats up the summer on Capitol Hill: HEA, WIA moving along

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT (HEA) began this summer with competing proposals and approaches from Sen. Tom Harkin and House Republicans. Harkin, with the support of NEA’s leaders and members, has focused his efforts on making college more affordable and accessible. “For generations, a college education has been the pathway to the middle class, but new challenges are threatening that promise for many families,” said the Iowa Democrat, who called the reauthorization “a historic opportunity for Congress to focus attention on college affordability and accountability, help borrowers with existing student debt, and increase transparency so students and families can make informed decisions.” Harkin’s plans include reinstating year-round Pell Grants, and supporting community college and industry partnerships. House Republicans, on the other hand, set off on a more piecemeal approach. In July, they passed three bills that would promote competency-based education, expand financial counseling for student loan borrowers, and simplify the information that the federal government publishes about colleges and universities. A Democratic amendment that would have allowed borrowers to refinance their loans at current interest rates failed. Meanwhile, also in July, President Obama signed into law the bipartisan, NEA-supported Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which provides billions of dollars to job training programs, including many at community colleges.
Every American deserves a fair shot at higher education. But these days college debt isn’t just a burden—it’s a barrier to accessing the American Dream. That’s why NEA has launched the Degrees Not Debt campaign, which aims to reduce student debt and make college affordable for all Americans, regardless of their family income. “College debt is a high price to pay for the attainment of a dream,” said Theresa Montaño, president of NEA’s National Council for Higher Education and professor at CSU Northridge.
Student debt has reached a staggering $1.2 trillion in the U.S., up from $300 billion a decade ago. That adds up to seven in 10 Americans who owe money for their college experiences, and the multiplication gets worse every year. Between 2004 and 2012, the average debt per borrower jumped 70 percent, according to the Federal Reserve of New York. Last year, it hit a whopping $29,400 per graduate, and, of course, some graduates owe much, much more.

At these levels, student debt has become an economic albatross, not only making it difficult for individual Americans to reach their dreams but also restricting the nation’s economic growth. Research shows that people with student loans are less likely to buy homes, or become entrepreneurs. One recent study showed that a rise in student debt corresponded to a 25 percent reduction in the start-up of small businesses, the backbone of the American economy. “The evidence is clear: we can’t build a strong middle class and a thriving economy if young people are drowning in debt,” said U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.).

Zavrel, an adjunct professor at Clackamas, is one of those young people. She and her husband, a college student whose loans will eventually push the couple’s shared student debt beyond $100,000, live modestly. They don’t yet have children. But their choices, every day, are limited by their enormous student debt.

“It has affected our lives in many ways, such as thinking about when we can have a family, if we can get a mortgage, things like that,” said Zavrel, who works two additional jobs. “For anybody who wants to go into something like social services, or if you want to be a teacher, I think that having that looming debt cloud in front of you is really tragic.”

Shouldn’t every American be able to get the education they need to meet their potential? Zavrel thinks so. She believes all Americans deserve a fair shot at higher education—and so do the tens of thousands of NEA members who have taken the Degrees Not Debt pledge to raise their voice for college affordability.
is projected to need an additional 22 million college-educated workers, and is likely to fall short by at least 3 million.

NOT ENOUGH PROGRESS

Some progress has been made, thanks to President Obama and the energetic advocacy of faculty, staff, and students. In early June, under the hopeful eye of Zavrel, who traveled to the White House to represent and advocate for her students, Obama signed an executive order that will enable an additional 5 million borrowers to cap their monthly payments at 10 percent of their income and seek federal loan forgiveness after 20 years—or 10 years for those in public service careers.

“We are here today because we believe that in America, no hardworking young person should be priced out of a higher education,” said Obama.

But not one month later, Sen. Warren’s bill to ease the student loan burden for 25 million borrowers failed to move forward in the Senate. The bill would have allowed Americans to refinance their student loans at current, lower interest rates, in much the same way that homeowners refinance their mortgages when interest rates drop. “We’re not giving up,” said Warren after Republicans blocked the bill. It will be back on the Senate floor this fall.

When it does, NEA Higher Ed members will be there, speaking up on behalf of their students—and themselves. “We have student debt, too. We are workers facing the conditions of indentured servitude just like the rest of the workforce,” said Judy Olson, chair of the NEA Contingent Faculty caucus and a lecturer at CSU Los Angeles. “We all workers need to be fighting together against the twin evils of the increased costs of college education…and the erosion of the benefits of that education.”

To find out more about the Degrees Not Debt campaign, and to sign the pledge and access campaign resources, including short video statements by Olson and Zavrel, visit nea.org/degreesnotdebt.

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY
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Seven ways of learning

When faced with a bewildering array of teaching options, focus on learning.

Navigating the “how-to-teach” industry of ideas

College teaching has always been challenging, but it is becoming downright difficult these days. As a faculty member you face heightened expectations around using technology, assessing learning, and teaching new subjects to a diverse population of students. The professor’s once privileged store of knowledge is now readily available in digital libraries and on the Internet. The lecture paradigm, while still the dominant mode of teaching in most institutions, is increasingly regarded as obsolete. As a conscientious teacher, you want to make intelligent and creative choices about your teaching, but sometimes you just don’t know what to do.

It is not for lack of advice. To the contrary, college teachers today are confronted by a dazzling array of bewildering options. Professors, like tourists on resort beaches, seem to attract vendors—not just vendors of products, though these are plentiful, but vendors of ideas. What you are offered in lieu of hand-woven blankets and silver jewelry are active learning, problem-based learning, learner-centered teaching, inquiry-based teaching, andragogy, learning styles, left- and right-brained thinking, cooperative learning, collaborative learning, flipped classrooms, as well as hybrid and online teaching. Some of these are good buys; others not so much.

The question is: how should you craft effective teaching within this confusing vendor environment? The answer is to remain purposeful and base your teaching methods on your intended learning goals.
Finding the Purpose of a Course

When I first started teaching, I tried very hard to use effective course design processes. I carefully chose my readings, decided what content was most relevant, and created engaging assignments based on my learning goals. Yet one course always nagged at me. The course was based on a five-level framework that students used to create their own program evaluation plans. While we discussed the framework in depth, I was often utterly perplexed to discover some students not using it appropriately in their final projects.

Then I began working with Jim Davis on his “Seven Ways of Learning.” That’s when it struck me: What I was really trying to do was teach students to make decisions about program evaluation based on this five-level model. I had not seen before that this course was based on the learning with mental models way of learning!

After I realized the course was teaching students a mental model, I could facilitate more appropriately. Now, every week I spend time walking through the model and providing opportunities for students to practice relevant decision making, using all of the strategies recommended for learning with mental models. I am able to focus my time and efforts appropriately. And I am much happier when it’s time to grade student projects!

— Bridget Arend, University of Denver
Teaching needs to be firmly grounded in goals and aligned with a particular way of learning. You do not want to use group work just to convey information, nor should you lecture when the goal is to teach a skill. Our work outlines which way of learning is best suited to bringing about desired outcomes.

1. **Goal:** Building skills  
   **Way of learning:** Behavioral learning  
   **Methods:** Tasks and procedures, practice exercises  

   **ARE YOUR STUDENTS** learning a skill where accuracy, precision, and efficiency are important? Is it based on a routine set of mental or physical operations? Can it be broken into steps and performed in a right or best way? These learning outcomes are well served by behavioral learning. Behavioral learning is based on behavioral psychology. Such skills are best learned when tasks are broken into concrete steps and practiced by students with the support of precise and timely feedback.

2. **Goal:** Acquiring Knowledge  
   **Way of learning:** Cognitive learning  
   **Methods:** Presentations, explanations  

   **DO STUDENTS NEED** to learn new ideas, terminology, or useful theories? Must they figure out how something functions, or understand and retain information? These learning outcomes are best served by cognitive learning. Cognitive learning is based on the psychology of how people pay attention to, process, and recall information. When instructors use cognitive learning effectively, they get students’ attention, help them see overall concepts and connections, relate new information to prior knowledge, and make meaning out of information.

   **“THE FIRST QUESTION A TEACHER SHOULD ASK IS: WHAT IS IT I REALLY WANT MY STUDENTS TO BE ABLE TO DO?”**

3. **Goal:** Developing critical, creative and dialogical Thinking  
   **Way of learning:** Learning through inquiry  
   **Methods:** Discussions, question-driven inquiries  

   **DO YOUR LEARNING** goals involve students being aware of and improving their own thinking? Do they need to criticize information, evaluate arguments and evidence, or reason? Does this learning involve creative thinking or appreciating other people’s thinking? These outcomes are best served by learning through inquiry. Based on theories of critical and creative thinking and classical philosophy, learning through inquiry involves the instructor asking probing questions to model and make the thinking process visible. Instructors must understand the thinking process and its many elements, provide opportunities for students to practice thinking through meaningful discussions, and provide well-targeted facilitation.

4. **Goal:** Cultivating problem-solving and decision-making abilities  
   **Way of learning:** Learning with mental models  
   **Methods:** Problems, case studies, labs, projects  

   **DO YOUR STUDENTS** need to learn to solve problems or make decisions? Do your goals involve finding and defining problems, generating solutions, and evaluating and choosing among solutions? Must students weigh the values of different options and predict outcomes? Goals such as these are best served by learning with mental models, based on theories of decision making and problem solving. When instructors effectively use this way of learning, they set up the appropriate practice opportunities, help

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**BEST PRACTICES > TEACHING ACCORDING TO A WAY OF LEARNING**

The first example: Greg Reihman teaches philosophy at Lehigh University and wants students to be able to analyze and evaluate arguments. Reihman understands and teaches according to the various stages of thinking, from identifying types of arguments and their elements, to being able to apply those elements. At first, Reihman uses basic questions prompts, then begins to dig deeper, involving the students in reconstructing arguments or leaving out steps on purpose to let students fill in the logic gaps. Finally, students demonstrate their ability to identify, reconstruct, and evaluate arguments through short papers. “In this way, as the course progresses, students gain the ability to think critically about arguments and come to appreciate the need for precision and care in such matters,” Reihman said.

The second example: Leticia Sara teaches political science at Red Rocks Community College where she routinely puts students in groups to explore controversial issues. In her American government course, she uses a group assignment to teach students about the complexities and various perspectives involved in how our society determines civil liberties. Her students work in groups around a particular civil liberty issue, such as a controversial art exhibit or a religious charity accepting public money. “Normally the students choose a side to defend that they agree with, but a great way of avoiding argument is to encourage students to represent the side they don’t necessarily agree with,” says Sara. Her goal isn’t to have any student “win” the argument, but rather to have students explore all sides and come to appreciate the multiple perspectives involved.
students identify and apply mental models to make decisions, and through their facilitation keep the focus on the process rather than just the outcome.

5 Goal: Exploring attitudes, feelings and perspectives
Way of learning: Learning through groups and teams
Methods: Group activities, team projects

DO YOUR LEARNING outcomes involve changing opinions, attitudes, or creating an awareness of multiple perspectives? Do you want students to deal with feelings or cultivate empathy? To build teamwork or collaboration skills? These learning outcomes are best served by learning through groups and teams. Based in human communication and group counseling theory, learning through groups builds on the dynamics formed by teams. It is most effective when instructors carefully design, orient, prepare, monitor, and help interpret the learning that occurs within groups.

6 Goal: Practicing professional judgment
Way of learning: Learning through virtual realities
Methods: Role play, simulations, dramatic scenarios, games

DO YOUR STUDENTS need to develop professional judgment within a variety of contexts? Is this best practiced in a safe environment? Do your students need to gain confidence and competence in complex situations? These are learning outcomes best served by learning through virtual realities. With roots in psychodrama, socio-drama, and gaming theory, learning through virtual realities can range from simple role play to high-tech simulations. Instructors carefully design or select the roles, scenarios or games that have the most potential. Virtual realities often run themselves, but the instructor must suspend, support and debrief the experience.

7 Goal: Reflecting on experience
Way of learning: Experiential learning
Methods: Internships, service learning, study abroad

DO YOUR STUDENTS need to get immersed in real-life work, service, or travel? Do your learning goals involve reflecting on and making meaning out of such an experience? These learning outcomes are best served by experiential learning. Experiential learning has its own theory base but is also informed by cognitive neuroscience findings that show learning is a natural, multisensory process that emerges out of experience. To use this way of learning effectively, instructors may need to match students to their experiences, but most importantly need to help students push beyond superficial reactions to those experiences.

REFERENCES:

Please visit http://sevenwaysoflearning.com/ for more information on the Seven Ways of Learning.
FSU faculty fight for sunshine in presidential search process

There appears to be a rash of politicians vying for university president positions lately (e.g., Purdue, College of Charleston, University of Nebraska). In the case of Florida State University, almost immediately after it became public in February that President Eric Barron had accepted the presidency at Pennsylvania State University, the press reported that powerful Republican State Senator John Thrasher, an alumnus of FSU (bachelor’s and law degrees) and namesake of the building housing the controversial FSU College of Medicine, wanted the FSU presidency. Within a few weeks, a 27-person search committee stacked with politicians, lobbyists, and businesspeople hired a search firm that is no stranger to recruiting political candidates for administration positions. Despite faculty and student calls for a distinguished academic leader, the search committee, upon the recommendation of the headhunter, voted 15-9 in favor of interviewing only Senator Thrasher, who was presumably casting a “long shadow” on the search process. Seeing the writing on the wall, the FSU chapter of the United Faculty of Florida had already started organizing to pressure the committee to reset the search. This pressure, along with applications from other political candidates, including a Florida House Representative and a Florida Supreme Court judge, led to the re-opening of the search, a new search firm, and a deadline for applications that was noticeably missing from the original job profile. Though Thrasher remains the frontrunner, the UFF-FSU Chapter has helped to bring light to a corrupt process of political cronyism. For more extensive details, see my blog, presidentsandpolitics.blogspot.com.

Jennifer Proffitt, an associate professor in the FSU School of Communications, is president of the United Faculty of Florida-FSU chapter.
The 10 Worst Governors

10. **NEW JERSEY GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE**
When Christie first ran for governor, he pledged to increase funds for public education. But then he got elected. In his first year in office, Christie cut $1 billion from public education, and specifically cut higher ed funding by 15 percent. Meanwhile, he also has handed out more than $2 billion in corporate tax breaks and referred to educators as “thugs” for opposing his policies that harm students.

9. **NEW MEXICO GOV. SUSANA MARTINEZ**
It’s not bad enough that state funding for higher education was cut nearly 40 percent between 2008 and 2013, Martinez also cut $15 million from programs for at-risk children this year!

8. **NORTH CAROLINA GOV. PAT MCCORY**
McCory’s tax plan would cost the state $500 million and provide massive tax cuts to the state’s wealthiest citizens, while raising taxes on the bottom 80 percent of taxpayers.

7. **KANSAS GOV. SAM BROWNBACK**
“Kansas has great schools,” wrote Brownback to The New York Times—but if that’s true, it’s in spite of Brownback. The governor has cut massively from public education—more than $500 million—and has opted to cut taxes for the rich rather than restore that funding.

6. **PENNSYLVANIA GOV. TOM CORBETT**
Corbett is trying to rewrite history in his latest budget proposals, but the damage has been done. His first two budgets cut $220 million from higher education, or nearly 20 percent, leading to tuition hikes of 7.5 percent. But hey, big corporations are doing okay in PA! Corbett also has cut business taxes by $1.2 billion.

5. **MAINE GOV. PAUL LEDPAGE**
LePage cut education funding by $12.5 million while handing out $200 million tax cuts that mostly benefited Maine’s wealthiest. “If you want a good education in Maine, go to a private school. If you can’t afford it, tough luck.” — LePage, 2012 speech.

4. **OHIO GOV. JOHN KASICH**
It’s good to be rich in Ohio! Kasich’s latest tax package gives the top 1 percent of Ohio taxpayers an average cut of $1,846, while the average break for the middle fifth of Ohio taxpayers is just $36.

3. **MICHIGAN GOV. RICK SNYDER**
Tuition for in-state Michigan students has increased more than 50 percent over the past decade, and now the average Michigan graduate owes more than $30,000 in student loans. Making matters worse, while Snyder has cut $1 billion from public education—including a 15 percent cut to public colleges and universities in 2011—he also has installed tax cuts worth $1.8 billion for big corporations.

2. **FLORIDA GOV. RICK SCOTT**
This is the guy who wants to raise tuition for humanities majors because the state “doesn’t need a lot more anthropologists...” But even more dangerously, he’s also the guy who slashed millions of dollars from Florida’s Bright Futures college scholarships, while pushing through a $30 million corporate tax cut. His goal is the privatization of public ed: Since 2008, spending per student (in higher ed) has been cut 41 percent.

1. **WISCONSIN GOV. SCOTT WALKER**
The latest on Scott Walker are allegations that he participated in a “criminal scheme” to coordinate fundraisers during the election to recall him from office in 2012. But let’s remember why voters took on that effort in the first place: He cut $1.6 billion from public education, trampled on workers’ rights, watched his state fall to 44th in the nation in job creation, and pledged to “use a divide and conquer” strategy on middle-class families for his own political goals.

FROM MAINE TO MICHIGAN TO MASSACHUSETTS, gubernatorial elections will be held in 36 states on November 4, including the homes of the 10 worst governors in the nation, as selected by NEA Education Votes fans and editors. “Sadly, so many governors currently in office make it a point to give tax breaks for jets and yachts, and turn their heads to crumbling schools and crowded classrooms,” that the competition to make the list was tough, said Education Votes editors. To get more political news and updates, visit educationvotes.nea.org.
Across the country, the founding American tenet that a healthy democracy requires a free public education is being challenged, and the state of Kansas may well be the frontline. Kansas is “the epicenter of a new battle over states’ obligation to adequately fund public education,” said the New York Times, whose editorial board last October wrote in support of a state court decision to increase education funding in Kansas and with distrust for Gov. Sam Brownback’s decision to create “huge tax cuts” instead of restore school funding. Since 2008, Kansas education funding has fallen 16.5 percent, including $500 million in cuts under Brownback’s administration. In response to this criticism, Brownback sent a letter to the Times, saying, “Kansas has great schools.” I was surprised to read it. I teach at Kansas City Kansas Community College and, while it is true Kansas has strong schools, this is not the message that has been conveyed in word or action by Brownback, his administration, or by the supermajority in the Kansas legislature. Instead, like officials in many states, Brownback has taken the position that public education is wasteful and inefficient.

Since his election, not only has Brownback ignored the expertise of professional, public educators, but the state Legislature is working to silence them. Bills have been proposed to restrict collective bargaining rights and make it more difficult for educators to pay union dues. Along with bills that exempt lawmakers from the Kansas Open Meetings Act, it’s difficult not to conclude that Brownback and his cronies aim to obstruct and suppress dissenting views, to garner as much control as possible, and to protect themselves from both public and judicial review.

In March, the state Supreme Court upheld a lower court’s decision that school funding cuts made by Brownback’s administration during the Great Recession violated the state constitution because they inequitably affected low-income districts. Meanwhile the question of “adequacy” of funding is being deliberated by another judicial panel. It’s difficult to believe that their decision won’t align with previous rulings ordering the state to increase school funding by hundreds of millions of dollars. However, because of Brownback’s massive tax cuts to benefit the state’s wealthiest citizens, just where this money will come from is a mystery.

Restructuring the tax system to benefit the rich, politicizing the appointment of judges, narrowing the bargaining rights and protections for teachers, and enabling legislators to work behind closed doors are just a few examples of how the Brownback administration operates today. They carry on as if they have no historical perspective of foresight. His brand of “trickle down” economics is bankrupting the state, and yet his shortsightedness still inspires some college administrators whose actions are attempts to dismantle shared governance, to weaken campus unions, and to turn the teaching profession into a service industry.

Unfortunately, some Kansans, good people that I know, have grown so tired that they’re leaving the state. But those who remain will continue to fight. As I write this, KNEA is preparing its legal challenge to a legislative repeal of teacher tenure, and we are heartened by polls showing Brownback trailing Paul Davis, the Democratic challenger for governor. The troops are rallying because we know that Sam Brownback’s first priority is not Kansas, it’s his political career.
Florida shenanigans
“The line of accession to the FSU leadership was more obvious than Kim Jong Un’s ascendency to the North Korean throne,” wrote a Florida columnist about the nomination of powerful state Sen. John Thrasher as president of Florida State University. Thrasher, a former chair of the state Republican Party and FSU alumnus, has helped steer millions to the school, but has no academic credentials. Faculty and students have protested loudly, and successfully pressured trustees to restart the search process with more transparency. Read more on pg. 10 of this issue.

Higher ed member elected to top of Massachusetts union
The new Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) president, who took office in July, is a senior lecturer at UMass Amherst. Beginning in 2004, Barbara Madeloni worked at the UMass School of Education, coordinating the Secondary Teacher Education Program. She is currently on leave as a senior lecturer in the labor studies department. As part of MTA’s new leadership, Madeloni promised, “We will ally with parents, students and community members to defend our public schools and colleges from dehumanizing accountability systems pushed by corporate and undemocratic interests.”

Massachusetts community college adjuncts have overwhelmingly approved a three-year contract, which provides for 3.5 percent pay raises in its first two years and 4 percent in its third. The new contract, which covers more than 5,000 contingent faculty members of MTA, also provides more job security and additional pay to attend campus meetings.

Welcome, Illinois staff!
The Logan Professional Staff Association at John A. Logan College, a community college in Carterville, Illinois, was officially certified by the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board this spring. The new unit of 60-plus union members includes full- and part-time non-teaching professional staff. This makes the fourth IEA-NEA affiliated union on the Logan College campus. “We’re rarin’ to go,” said co-president Angela Calcaterra. (For more from Calcaterra, see pg. 10.)

Privatizing faculty in Michigan
Contingent faculty at a handful of Michigan community colleges are at the epicenter of a disturbing trend: the outsourcing of academic labor to private educational staffing companies. In July, Inside Higher Ed reported that a sixth Michigan college has signed a contract with EDUStaff, allowing the private company to take over recruitment and management of adjunct faculty at Jackson College. Full-time faculty are concerned about potential effects on “instruction, students, and professional relationships,” said Alana Tucker, president of the local faculty union, which represents full-time faculty only. The colleges say that their goal is to save money. Through privatization, the colleges avoid contributing to state pensions on behalf of their contingent faculty—who comprise about 70 percent of teaching staff. In its first year with EDUStaff, North Michigan Central College saved $250,000 by ending retirement contributions, Inside Higher Ed reported. But the move also means that educational values aren’t the driving force behind important decisions, noted Adrianna Kezar, a professor of higher ed who directs the Delphi Project. “The core function and mission of the institution being outsourced is fairly ludicrous,” she said. “Why aren’t we outsourcing administrators and staff if this is such a good idea?”

Let’s talk about the trend toward “accountability” in higher ed...
You can turn on the television and you can hear the President of the United States talking about how we need to measure the ‘bang for the buck’ in higher education. I remember when I heard that, I cringed—because whenever they talk about ‘bang for the buck’ it comes down to something you can measure, and, in K12, it usually comes down to a standardized test. But in higher ed, there are a lot of politicians and businessmen who think it makes sense to measure how much money an institution’s graduates earn. But just think about what happens if a university turns out a lot of teachers, or social workers, or nurses, and by the way, these are usually women, or other professionals with social justice hearts? Would you say these jobs are not good ‘bang for our buck’?

What is the purpose of public higher education?
A quality public university doesn’t exist for the prestige of its alumni, and it doesn’t exist for corporate investors. It exists because this is a public good to have well-educated men and women in society. Whenever somebody wants to boil it down and put a dollar sign next to something that says education, they are missing the point. We will destroy education in this way.

So what’s the good news?
The good news for a union like ours, a union of educators from preschool to graduate school, is that there really is common ground. Our higher ed brothers and sisters are the vanguard. They are the front line soldiers saying the war is not over. They are the vanguard. They are the vanguard. They are the vanguard.

TWO-MINUTE INTERVIEW > NEA PRESIDENT LILY E. GARCÍA
Former Utah Teacher of the Year, Lily Garcia was elected president of NEA by a huge majority of delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in July. Garcia took office on September 1, but first she sat down with the NEA Advocate for an interview about higher education issues and trends.

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In Civil Society

The puzzle of academic freedom in the age of social media

BY JASON WALTA

THE INTERNET, AND PARTICULARLY SOCIAL MEDIA, is perhaps the most powerful tool in human history for the dissemination and discussion of ideas. It is no wonder, then, that academics spend an increasing amount of their scholarly lives online. But what has emerged in recent years is a confounding puzzle over whether it is less—or more—regulation of the Internet’s ground rules that truly supports academic freedom.

On the one hand, faculty have clearly seen their speech and academic freedom diminished by schools’ imposition of social-media and other policies. Indeed, just recently, a federal appeals court upheld the dismissal of a tenure-track professor at the University of South Dakota for referring to a colleague as a “back-stabbing sneak” in an email (http://goo.gl/1TAHBL). The university successfully argued that the dismissal was justified because the email violated a broadly worded “civility” policy for faculty. (The administrators who wrote that policy are perhaps unaware that a great deal of academic debate can be less than civil—such as one philosopher recently calling another’s book “mind-numbingly repetitive, toe-curlingly pretentious, and amateurish in the extreme” in the pages of an Oxford philosophy journal [http://goo.gl/PvzSYd].) The university successfully argued that the dismissal was justified because the email violated a broadly worded “civility” policy for faculty. (The administrators who wrote that policy are perhaps unaware that a great deal of academic debate can be less than civil—such as one philosopher recently calling another’s book “mind-numbingly repetitive, toe-curlingly pretentious, and amateurish in the extreme” in the pages of an Oxford philosophy journal [http://goo.gl/PvzSYd].)

Another high-profile example came earlier this year, when the Kansas Board of Regents announced a strict social-media policy that applies to all faculty in the state’s public universities, community colleges, and technical colleges. The new policy was handed down shortly after the University of Kansas suspended David Guth, a tenured journalism professor, for posting to Twitter this criticism of the National Rifle Association: “#NavyYardShooting The blood is on the hands of the #NRA. Next time, let it be YOUR sons and daughters. Shame on you. May God damn you.”

Under the Kansas Regents’ policy (http://goo.gl/7BwYmR), faculty face discipline for statements on social media that are “contrary to the best interests of the employer.” As many have rightly noted (http://goo.gl/t2NpX9), such a policy would have a profoundly stifling effect on academic freedom. After all, how can an academic freely discuss important or controversial topics—such as the role of guns in society—knowing all too well that it is a fireable offense to say something the school later decides is not in its “best interests”?

Unfortunately, as a result of the U.S. Supreme Court’s long war of attrition against the constitutional rights of public employees, the Kansas Regents’ vague and stifling social-media policy is probably enforceable. The Court’s decision in Garcetti v. Ceballos (2006)—which I’ve discussed in this column before—holds that a public employee is entitled to no First Amendment protection at all for speech made “pursuant to” her job duties. And, even when a public employee speaks as a “citizen” rather than as an employee, the Roberts Court’s decisions have made clear that the employer’s interest in maintaining order and efficiency will trum p the First Amendment rights of employees.

Yet, as troubling as this trend may be, it is far from clear that academic freedom necessarily benefits from a completely unregulated, Wild-West approach to social media and the Internet. In an eye-opening article entitled “Why Women Aren’t Welcome on the Internet” (http://goo.gl/Mkyivs), writer Amanda Hess described how women routinely face gendered threats, abuse, and harassment—often from anonymous sources—that discourage them from fully participating in online discussion and communities.

That is true for women scholars, as well. When Mary Anne Franks, a feminist law professor, appeared on a popular legal blog to discuss her pioneering scholarship on how to combat so-called “revenge porn,” she was barraged with abusive anonymous comments, including one stating, “she needs to be raped” (http://goo.gl/mDixeP).

Maintaining academic freedom online requires protection of scholars’ ability to raise and discuss controversial, even dangerous, ideas. But it also requires norms ensuring that important voices will not be hounded out of the discussion through threats and abuse. Right now, the balance seems out-of-whack in both directions. Getting it right will be a delicate—and evolving—task for academics and administrators alike.

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The Mayday $5K Campaign & National Mobilization for Equity

THE NATIONAL MOBILIZATION FOR equity is committed to ending contingency as the norm in higher education. At present, three-quarters of all teaching jobs at American colleges are held by miserably underpaid, precarious and poorly-supported contingent faculty. This situation not only affects all faculty members, both contingent and tenure-track, but it also negatively impacts our profession, our students and the quality of their education.

The “Mayday Declaration on Contingency in Higher Education” is the founding text of a nationwide Mayday $5K Campaign that started last year in New Paltz, N.Y. (Read the founding text here: http://bit.ly/XEta7u.) Its goal is to ensure educational quality, fairness and equity by improving working conditions of all contingent faculty members in higher education.

The Mayday $5K Campaign translates the slogan “Campus Equity Now” into concrete, achievable terms. The $5,000 minimum starting salary for a three-credit semester course is not entirely arbitrary. It was the answer to a student’s question: “What would equity mean at New Paltz?”

The figure of $5,000 is between the $3,000 currently paid to adjuncts at New Paltz and the $7,000 recommended by the Modern Language Association. (See here: www.mla.org/mla_recommendation_course.)

The National Mobilization for Equity was formed in early 2014 and rapidly developed into a formidable national coalition. Its aim is to activate contingent faculty at the grassroots level and provide national coordination. It has already gained the support of AFT, AAUP, CFA, NEA, NYSUT, PSC-CUNY, SEIU, UUP and the California Part-time Faculty Association, among others, altogether representing more than seven million members:

The statewide SUNY Student Assembly, representing 465,000 students, passed a resolution in April declaring that the “demeaning treatment of contingent faculty negatively impacts the quality of education at SUNY, as contingent faculty are not able to deliver the same quality of education as they would if they were better supported by receiving a living wage, office space to meet with students, and other necessary resources for fulfilling their role as educators and advisors.”

The National Mobilization for Equity seeks to expose the corrosive effects of contingent working conditions by reaching out to colleagues, students, prospective students along with their parents, taxpayers, legislators and the general public.

To learn more, and to join our efforts, visit: http://nationalmobilizationforequity.org.

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