

Overview

Our nation is strengthened by the free exchange of ideas, observes University of Massachusetts history professor Kevin Boyle in this issue's opening article.

Boyle writes in answer to questions on the minds of many Americans following the tragedy of September 11: When our nation is under attack, must we do things differently? Have our nation's values changed? Can the United States be both free and secure? Do I need to stop and reexamine my own goals and my work?

The answer to this last question, at least, is clear: We in the academy, Boyle proposes, should do what we've always done. Though teaching and learning may be different in a time of national crisis, the work of educating our students, generating knowledge, and providing service to our campuses and our society is as valuable as it's always been. So, too, is the academy's commitment to academic freedom, intellectual honesty, and tolerance as important as ever.

In this light, *Thought & Action's* role as a forum for discussing the pressing issues facing faculty and staff in higher education hasn't changed either. We continue to provide space for NEA higher education members—and their colleagues throughout the academy—to discuss issues critical to our profession and to share data, philosophy, opinion, and

anecdotes on what we do: educate students.

As usual, a number of our colleagues have taken us up on this offer of space to air their views about where higher education is heading and who's steering the ship. Others have written simply to pass along some friendly advice on what's been working in the classroom for them.

As for airing views, J. Jeffrey Tillman, in "Online Education: 76 Trombones and Big Parade," raises the specter of the sideshow barker—college administration's newest employment category. In giving Professor Harold Hill access to the Internet, Tillman suggests, we may really be giving higher education the business.

In this vein also, Matthew Miltich tells us he's not about to climb on the assessment bandwagon. Notes Miltich in "All the Fish in the River: An Essay on Assessment": "Every experience of learning, like each learner, is singular." For Miltich, provision comes before assessment, teaching before testing.

In "Picket Line Epiphanies and a Bittersweet Epilogue," Noel Jacob Kent reminisces about last year's educator's strike in Hawaii, the first time a strike has shut down a state's entire education system, from kindergarten through graduate school.

Kent relishes the unity and power demonstrated by his colleagues in the University of Hawaii Professional Assembly. But he also acknowledges that there are great disparities in what different sectors of the faculty—especially research university faculty—require from their union.

His frank discussion of these differences, though painful to some and embarrassing to others, is just the sort of honest dialogue faculty members at many institutions need to have if we are to accomplish our long-cherished goal of creating a powerful national voice for college and university faculty.

Touching on other areas of concern, graduate student Kevin Mattson takes a fresh look at the Ph.D. glut and suggests a unique approach that would put Ph.D.s to work while enriching society as a whole: Remember the WPA?

Addressing another hot topic, a group of colleagues from Indiana University joins the college access

debate with an original proposal for fairness in college admissions. Their article, “Merit-Aware Admissions in Public Universities” begins on page 35.

LaVona Reeves writes about basic writing pioneer Mina Shaughnessy, Kathleen Stassen Berger raises some questions about the “theory and practice” of teaching, and James Spencer provides a detailed description of how he’s adapted the case-study method to teaching chemistry.

Add to this Susan Willey on research in the cyberspace era, Paul Weizer on redefining sexual harassment, and John Magney on strikes in higher education, and there’s quite a bit for you, our readers, to chew on.

We hope you’ll do just this—and get back to us with your agreements and disagreements. You’ll find in this issue’s Correspondence section that some of your colleagues have much to say—pro and con—about articles that appeared in our last issue.

— *Con Lehane, editor*