

I, TERRORIST

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23—Education Secretary Rod Paige said Monday that the National Education Association, one of the nation's largest labor unions, was like "a terrorist organization" because of the way it was resisting many provisions of a school improvement law pushed through Congress by President Bush in 2001.

The New York Times, Feb. 24, 2004

They've discovered us at last.
At dawn I watch for the black
SUV slinking up the street
fog bleeding from the tailpipe
now we are exposed
for what we only whispered
in linoleum-floored hallways where we
knew no one was listening:
2.7 million card-carrying terrorists
blending into the population
(though some of us kept our beards)
hidden where we knew
they would look last: in classrooms
teaching the skills of revolutionaries—
reading, writing, arithmetic,
science, art and critical thinking.
Like Huck, we find sivilization wanting,
but we're not lighting out for the territories.
Enemy combatants, we infiltrate the schools
undermining the government's best efforts
at (re)educating its children to the horror
the horror for one televised split-second
of Janet Jackson's breast before
a land where the highest paid
government employee in every state
is the university football coach
or, sometimes, the basketball coach.
First Afghanistan. Then Iraq.
Next the Ivies or perhaps the Pac Ten.
I can see us led from the classrooms
handcuffed, perp-walked before the cameras
to rows of chainlink cells at Guantanamo
detained indefinitely
no longer entrusted to vote
no rights no lawyers no appeals.
Oh, they apologized for stating the truth so bluntly:
"As one who grew up on the receiving
end of insensitive remarks," said Mr. Paige,

who is black and was born in a segregated Mississippi,
'I should have chosen my words better.'
They don't want to offend us.
But they've learned how dangerous we are.

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TEACHERS, TERRORISTS, AND TYRANNY: A RESPONSE TO SECRETARY PAIGE

On Monday, February 23, 2004, Education Secretary Rod Paige addressed the National Governors' Association at the White House, during which he referred to the National Education Association—the preeminent and largest American union—as a “terrorist organization.” His comments took aim at NEA’s move toward legal action against the White House for failing to adequately fund the No Child Left Behind act, an example of what Paige described as “obstructionist scare tactics.” The comparison was quickly condemned by politicians and educators of all persuasions; Paige himself later expressed regret and dismissed the moment as a joke gone awry.

The incident, however, should not fall from view too rapidly. It raises difficult questions concerning the relationship between education and democracy, questions that require open and frank public discussion. The terms also seem glaringly inconsistent with an administration that promised to unite rather than divide. Paige’s comments were an egregious, uneducated, and lamentable error, but an error that asks all of us to reflect upon and talk about hope for respectful common ground.

I write as a professor in a public university in Massachusetts, in a department of communication often characterized by left-leaning politics, critique of consumer culture, and determination for inspiring activism and healthy public discourse. Many (certainly not all) of our several hundred undergraduate majors share these politics and concern over the current administration’s agenda. And many of these students, when given a platform, are quick to condemn those who do not agree with their political vision, those who lean to the right, those who support the Bush administration, and even those who simply self-identify as Republicans. I can speak from experience of the countless troubling times earnest and well-meaning students have translated their enthusiasm into venom for people who do not see the world through the same perspective.

I can also speak from experience that I and many colleagues do not tolerate such positioning for long. While we recognize and encourage

deeply held convictions, we ask our students to translate their private desires into public judgments, and to do so only after considering their own opinions critically. We do this because we are committed to a vision of democratic exchange that does not terminate in one group's possession of moral authority, and because we support a notion of democratic communication that treats political competitors as adversaries rather than enemies.

Paige's comments alarm me precisely because they fail this simple act of democratic generosity, and I cannot help but conclude that given a penchant for expressing them, he himself does not appreciate the benefits of the kind of education NEA members provide. His comments demonstrate the partisan ugliness and tragic polarization that imprison or make a mockery of a vision of democracy as a ground between differing opinions. But worse still, his comments demonstrate a cavalier attitude toward those who see the world differently that, taken to its extreme, sows the seeds of tyranny.

We have all said inappropriate things and told inappropriate jokes. We can give Paige the benefit of the doubt, but he first should show respect to the power of words. To call an organization of educators who oppose one's policies "terrorists" would be incendiary under any circumstance, but it all the more so in the wake of 9/11; the comparison also risks legitimizing Al Qaeda's actions as if they were educators seeking to effect public policy. He tried to explain himself by declaring a distinction between the "Washington-based organization" and the teachers who make up the NEA, but this excuse itself is insulting. Paige called us terrorists, plain and simple. He cast 2.7 million members of the NEA under that horrific word, whose history cannot be erased with a laugh. 2.7 million fellow citizens. 2.7 million voters.

If I regarded Paige the way his comments regard me, I would continue the cycle by throwing equally venomous terms at him. But I was educated well and humanely. I can spot a profound error when I see one, because I have learned not to polarize, not to vilify, not to simplify, not to turn adversaries into enemies. I learned this from my teachers, and I encourage this in my students. Secretary Paige makes my job remarkably difficult because comments like his destroy the very trust students need to practice dissent, practice disagreement, and practice democracy. It is that point that I ask him—and all of us—to consider as he stands in public and directs the resources of the nation's youth.

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DEAR EDITOR:

In “Campus Accreditation: Here Comes the Corporate Model,” Frank H.W. Edler exhibits a prevailing academic paranoia that corporate models and definitions will “determine what quality means in higher education, where business values are replacing educational values at an unprecedented rate.”¹ Fundamentally, Edler fears that corporate quality is replacing educational quality, with the result that “educational institutions are reduced to a ‘production model.’”²

His “ivory tower” approach to the quality of education denies the simple truth that institutions do, in fact, market themselves and compete for money, programs, students, administrators, staff, and faculty. His statement “I don’t strive for the truth with my students a little bit harder because I get paid a little bit more”³ gilds the stark reality that faculty salary and salary increases continue to dominate faculty “shared dialogue,” suggesting that faculty may be less interested in “striving for truth” than they are in marketing their intellectual inquiry.⁴

Edler asks why the Higher Learning Commission “is applying corporate assessment and improvement models—even modified ones—to institutions of higher education” and, without a pause, states his own view that “[t]he answer in a broad context has to do with the global ascendance of corporate capitalism as an unchallenged worldview.”⁵ Perhaps he should look at one of his own unchallenged assumptions, that “[t]he central value that governs the mission of higher education is the value of striving for truth freely through shared dialogue. This value is not for sale...”⁶

Edler doesn’t just fear the corporate model; he hates both it and its quality improvement methods. The sentiment is common to those faculty who see the ennobling aspects of the Academe being surrendered to the “vulgar and commercial standards of the business world.”⁷ The noble acts of teaching and learning are, some faculty fear, being turned into a business activity, where teaching is a support service and learning is a product that, like other products, is sold to consumers and “is ‘driven’ by marketability, delivery, technology, availability, and efficiency.”⁸

Concluding his challenge to the Higher Learning Commission and Steven D. Crow, its executive director, whom he accuses of leveraging his “entrepreneurial vision of higher education,” Edler identifies the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) as further weakening the teaching and learning function.⁹

Alternative accreditation, he says, “is immensely attractive to those administrators [emphasis added]” who don’t wish to gear up for one or two years prior to the end of a 10-year period but prefer “a continuous accreditation review offered by AQIP.”¹⁰ Edler describes AQIP as “a

watered-down version of TQM."¹¹ By innuendo, he suggests that "those administrators" not only want not to work intensely the two years prior to accreditation but are motivated primarily by a desire to reduce costs.

Quoting AQIP's Frequently Asked Questions page of the AQIP Web site, Edler says that traditional accreditation is cited as costing as much as one million dollars for a full comprehensive self-study for larger universities, as contrasted to AQIP's much more inexpensive services.¹² The reader has to begin noticing that Edler doesn't much like or trust administrators, whom he views as imposing decisions top-down.¹³

Edler cursorily lists AQIP's nine criteria and then finds three problems with them. He faults AQIP for having no separate criterion for governance, no separate criterion for teaching, and for engaging in "double speak."¹⁴ Edler finds objectionable AQIP's not following the Helping Students Learn criterion by criterion for teaching.¹⁵ This omission he finds "shocking" and made even "more blatant when one realizes that there is a separate criterion for support services (criterion 6, supporting institutional operations)."¹⁶ He admits that AQIP recognizes "the central importance of the teaching-learning process for institutions of higher education: 'the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context' is the 'shared purpose of all higher education organizations.'"¹⁷

Nonetheless, Edler argues, "the effect of AQIP is ultimately the same [as Baldrige] in that teaching is separated from learning and treated as a support process (a means of production)."¹⁸ That separation, in turn, divests "faculty of their unique role in the teaching-learning process."¹⁹ This desire for a unique role leads to the grudging concession, "Support services personnel, administration, and maintenance staff are all important for any college or university to function, but they are not directly involved in the teaching-learning process—teachers are."²⁰ This statement smacks of faculty elitism.

To get at the heart of the teaching issue, one has to look at what Edler says about "shared governance." Edler believes that total quality management, and hence AQIP, only "give the illusion of offering a voice for workers' self determination."²¹ Beneath the surface of Edler's discussion of shared governance exists the notion that faculty engage in democracy while administrators impose decisions top-down. As a faculty member who has served two terms as president of a state faculty governance body, I find Edler's view of administration one that negates much good work accomplished over the last decade by faculty senates and councils. True shared governance remarkably demonstrates decisions made between and among faculty, administration, and staff. In many institutions today, faculty, administration, and staff do "jointly decide on the system itself and how the system is to be used in the college or university."²²

AQIP's "Helping Students Learn" asks the following kinds of questions:

What are the common student learning objectives you hold for all of your students (regardless of their status or particular program of study) and the pattern of knowledge and skills you expect your students to possess upon completion of their general and specialized studies?

By what means do you ensure your student learning expectations, practices, and development objectives align [Watch that TQM jargon!] with your mission, vision, and philosophy?

By what means do you create and maintain a climate that celebrates intellectual freedom, inquiry, reflection, respect for intellectual property, and respect for differing and diverse opinions?²³

Edler apparently translates the "you" in the above questions as excluding faculty, and understands the systems portfolio as something created by some administrative group working behind closed doors somewhere.

This is contrary to AQIP's systemic view, "defining and evaluating all of the key systems or processes within an institution as they relate to learning, and demanding concrete indicators that measure the effectiveness of those systems and processes."²⁴ To my mind, The AQIP systems approach doesn't treat teaching "as something even less than a support service."²⁵ Moreover, AQIP suggests no standardization or reduction of variation, a claim Edler—using the Parker and Slaughter article "Beware! TQM Is Coming to Your Campus"—makes to support his opinion that continuous improvement runs counter to intellectual inquiry and academic freedom.²⁶ The systems portfolio, rightly approached and encouraged by AQIP, brings people out of offices across institutions to "examine the key processes that an institution employs to create value directly for its students and its other stakeholders."²⁷

According to Edler, a third problem related to AQIP is its "double-speak." By that, Edler means that "the author both criticizes and patronizes the Baldrige Award."²⁸ AQIP on its FAQ pages compares AQIP criteria with the Baldrige categories:

AQIP differs from the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in several respects: AQIP has 9 criteria (versus 7 for Baldrige), AQIP includes results in every criterion (while Baldrige Criterion 7 aggregates all results), AQIP has separate criteria for different work processes like teaching, partnering, administration, or research and other major goals (while Baldrige Criterion 6 covers all work processes), and, most importantly, AQIP is focused exclusively on higher education. Baldrige (and the state programs modeled on it) are award programs, not accreditation processes. As such,

they have different goals, and consequently use techniques not appropriate for accreditation. AQIP strives to both stimulate continuous improvement and assure the public and funding agents of the quality of higher education providers, something no award program even attempts.²⁹

Edler misses the critical point made, that AQIP is *not an award program*: “AQIP strives to both stimulate continuous improvement and assure the public and funding agents of the quality of higher education providers.”³⁰ Where’s the “double-speak”? If Edler would actually read AQIP’s “Principles and Criteria for Improving Academic Quality,” he would see that AQIP addresses the heart of what an institution is about—asking the institution to analyze, understand, and explore opportunities for improving all of its processes.

As I stated earlier, Edler sets out to counter what he describes as the “global ascendance of corporate capitalism as an unchallenged worldview.”³¹ He rejects the idea that education is a product and students are consumers. He sees the primary activity of educational institutions as teaching and learning, “not itself a business activity” and though “the education process can be defined in numerous ways...teaching and learning does not inherently involve the activity of buying and selling.”³² Education is not production, and it should not be driven by marketability, delivery, technology, availability, and efficiency. Educational values should not become corporate values. Learning is not a product, nor is everything else a means of production.³³ Teaching is not one of “many myriad functions of an organization.”³⁴

Edler is simply wrong when he labels the Academic Quality Improvement Program a watered-down version of TQM (total quality management). Nothing about AQIP is watered down. AQIP’s nine criteria are robust and challenging for an institution embarking on continuous quality improvement. The criteria begin with Understanding Students and Other Stakeholders’ Needs, a criterion that examines the system, “which reestablishes the basis for accountability by determining the requirements, expectations, and preferences of an institution’s stakeholders”; this examination helps the institution delineate its mission and vision, which then drives everything else—“the design and operation of the other systems and processes an institution establishes to carry out its mission.”³⁵

AQIP, far from omitting teaching, focuses on the teaching-learning process and identifies Helping Students Learn as “the shared purpose of all higher education institutions.”³⁶ The examination encompasses learning objectives, student learning and development, intellectual climate, academic programs and courses, student preparation, technology and diversity, program and course delivery, faculty and staff roles, teaching and learning effectiveness, course sequencing and scheduling, learning

and co-curricular support, student assessment measures, analysis of results, and improvement efforts. Edler would dispense with corporate quality improvement methods, including measuring accurately an institution's performance in key processes like teaching and learning and, especially, the accountability that lifts education from its unfettered and free search for truth.³⁷ He would like to hold onto the traditional Academe, "separate enough from political, economic, and social pressures to be objective commentators on the very society that sustains them."³⁸ Steven Crow is right to point out that this view of the university and its role in society "[is not] particularly viable in a democratic society in which access to higher education...is...a 'right' rather than...a privilege for the elite and wealthy...[not] viable in a capitalistic society in which higher education is a multi-billion dollar business heavily dependent on federal and state financial aid programs necessary for students...to attend."³⁹

I find AQIP cause to celebrate. My institution, Missouri Western State College, became an AQIP member institution in July 2003. I'm proud of the institution for its comprehensive strategic planning process and for its recognition that AQIP integrates well with the planning in which the institution has engaged for two years now. I'm also proud that Missouri Western became the first public four-year institution in Missouri to embrace alternative accreditation. James Scanlon, president of the institution, points out that continuous quality improvement is our business and that as educators we work to improve students' lives and, through them, society:

Education is by nature a quality improvement process. As educators, we work continuously to improve our students' lives through enhanced learning. We add value to their intellectual, economic, and personal lives through their experiences with us in and beyond the classroom. We focus, in fact, on improving the quality of their learning outcomes in order ultimately to improve the quality of their lives. Continuous quality improvement (CQI) for individuals and, through them, for the society is our business.⁴⁰

Taking "a systemic view, defining and evaluating all of the key systems or processes within an institution as they relate to learning, and demanding concrete indicators that measure the effectiveness of those systems and processes...advances the core purpose of all higher education and delineates a higher education institution's mission and vision."⁴¹

Every institution should be asking the two questions posed repeatedly in AQIP's nine criteria: "Are we doing the right things to achieve our mission? And are we doing these things well?"⁴²

Frank Edler has taught philosophy at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, Nebraska, since 1993. His institution is not an AQIP

member, making me suspect that his research in traditional and alternative accreditation is only as deep as the Parker and Slaughter article that spurred him into his “beware TQM” and AQIP’s (he thinks) “watered-down” version of it.

He certainly has spent some surface time on the AQIP and Higher Learning Commission Web pages. This allows him to, at least, list in the correct order AQIP’s nine criteria and to demonstrate a rudimentary understanding of Interest Exploration, Self-Assessment, Participation Application (he calls it a Request), Strategy Forum, and Portfolio Appraisal. Separated from the accreditation process of either the Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) or the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), Edler assumes the role of an objective commentator but pursues a peculiar notion of truth. In that pursuit, he’s more often wrong than right, as in, for example, his mistaken notion that an institution can’t set its own goals for continuous improvement.⁴³ Missouri Western did exactly that.

AQIP’s criteria were integrated into Western’s own planning goals and Objectives, and the Action Projects set at the Strategy Forum were the priority areas within institutional planning—Applied Learning, Student Engagement, and Communicating Quality, particularly the quality of applied learning and community service as signatures for the institution. Not only does AQIP recognize the central importance of the teaching-learning process at institutions, it asks institutions to determine and document effective teaching and learning and to communicate these across the institution.⁴⁴

Let’s hear it for not being afraid to be entrepreneurial, responsive, and collaborative; let’s hear it for enlisting the energy of everyone within institutions of higher learning in the effort to continuously improve.⁴⁵ 

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ENDNOTES

¹ Frank H.W. Edler, “Campus Accreditation: Here Comes the Corporate Model,” (Winter 2004), 91, available at www.nea.org/he/heta04/w04p91.pdf.

² Edler, 93.

³ Edler, 101.

⁴ Edler, 101.

⁵ Edler, 101.

⁶ Edler, 101.

⁷ David Arnold, John Harman, and Debra L. Vanderbilt, “Quality as Stealth,” *Planning for Higher Education* (Volume 27, Winter 1998-99), 29.

⁸ Edler, 93.

⁹ Edler, 94.

- ¹⁰ Edler, 94.
- ¹¹ Edler, 94.
- ¹² Edler, 98.
- ¹³ Edler, 98-100.
- ¹⁴ Edler,99.
- ¹⁵ Edler, 100.
- ¹⁶ Edler, 99.
- ¹⁷ Edler, 100.
- ¹⁸ Edler, 100.
- ¹⁹ Edler,100.
- ²⁰ Edler, 98.
- ²¹ Edler, 99.
- ²² Academic Quality Improvement Project, "Principles and Criteria for Improving Academic Quality," 5.
- ²³ Academic Quality Improvement Project, "Principles and Criteria for Improving Academic Quality," 4.
- ²⁴ Edler, 100
- ²⁵ Edler, 98.
- ²⁶ Academic Quality Improvement Project, "Principles and Criteria for Improving Academic Quality," 4.
- ²⁷ Edler, 100.
- ²⁸ AQIP, "Frequently Asked Questions," www.aqip.org/FAQ.html#compare
- ²⁹ AQIP, "Frequently Asked Questions," www.aqip.org/FAQ.html#compare
- ³⁰ Edler, 101.
- ³¹ Edler, 93.
- ³² Edler, 93.
- ³³ Edler,94.
- ³⁴ Edler,94.
- ³⁵ Academic Quality Improvement Project, "Principles and Criteria for Improving Academic Quality," 4.
- ³⁶ Academic Quality Improvement Project, "Principles and Criteria for Improving Academic Quality," 5.
- ³⁷ Edler, 101.
- ³⁸ Edler quotes Crow, 92.
- ³⁹ Edler quotes Crow, 92.
- ⁴⁰ 109th Annual Meeting, "Integrating AQIP into Strategic Planning" (March 27-30, 2004).
- ⁴¹ Academic Quality Improvement Project, "Principles and Criteria for Improving Academic Quality," 4.
- ⁴² Academic Quality Improvement Project, "Principles and Criteria for Improving Academic Quality," 4.
- ⁴³ Edler, 97.
- ⁴⁴ Academic Quality Improvement Project, "Principles and Criteria for Improving Academic Quality," 5.
- ⁴⁵ J. David Arnold, John Harman, and Debra L. VanderBilt, "Quality as Stealth," *Planning for Higher Education* (Volume 27, Winter 1998-99), 30.

Although I have reservations about Jeanie C. Crain's response to my article, I thank her for the challenges she poses. I had the opportunity to meet her last fall at Missouri Western State College, where I gave a paper on Wright Morris. After a discussion of AQIP among a number of the college faculty members, it was clear from our discussion that Crain was a strong proponent of AQIP, although she did agree that the college would be best served if it had a strong faculty senate prior to contracting with AQIP as an alternative accreditation procedure.

Whatever reservations she may have had at that time, it is safe to say that Crain is now "gung-ho" for AQIP. Just as she says that she is suspicious of me for not having gone through the AQIP process, I am suspicious of her unblemished glorification of AQIP, not only because her college has already committed itself to AQIP, but also because it is hard for me to imagine her doing otherwise, since she is Special Assistant to the President. Crain is now a true believer and a defender of the faith known as CQI, or continuous quality improvement.

Indeed, she quotes her own president, James Scanlon, as saying that "Education is by nature a quality improvement process." I do not disagree with Scanlon on this point, but when he says in the last line of the quotation cited by Crain that "Continuous quality improvement (CQI) for individuals [not customers?] and, through them, for the society is our business," I have to part company with him. Of course, education is always about ways of improving itself, but when that process of improvement is reduced to the corporate model and the implementation of that model is the college's "business," then Scanlon has redefined education in corporate terms. In other words, the "business" of college is business, and teaching-learning had better redefine itself in those terms.

This is why Crain labels me an elitist (I do find this amusing after having taught at a community college for 11 years) and stereotypes my approach as an "ivory tower approach." Apparently, for Crain, any educational institution unwilling to bow to the corporate model is elitist.

She says that "It never occurs to Edler to ask whether educational institutions have successfully demonstrated quality externally." Crain makes two assumptions here: (1) there is a need for educational institutions to demonstrate quality externally and (2) the only successful way to demonstrate quality externally is by using corporate quality improvement methods. Most people would agree with the first assumption: educational institutions should be held accountable and should be evaluated externally. The faulty logic occurs in the second assumption: there are, of course, other ways for educational institutions to demonstrate quality externally besides the corporate model. Crain, however, goes right past these alternatives to assert the false dilemma that either an educational

institution uses a corporate model like AQIP and is thereby able successfully to demonstrate quality externally or an educational institution does not use a corporate model and is not able successfully to demonstrate quality externally. This logic is blarney.

Besides her faulty reasoning, Crain at times simply misreads what I am saying. Near the end of her critique, she refers to my “mistaken notion that an institution [using AQIP] can’t set its own goals for continuous improvement.” She asserts this without providing evidence. In my article, I state quite clearly that “The institution sets its own goals, and progress toward these goals is measured and assessed” (p. 97). My actual criticism was that educational institutions cannot themselves modify the nine AQIP criteria—apparently AQIP doesn’t believe in the continuous improvement of its own criteria—and, thus, “if you think an institution can set its own goals and avoid the corporate methodology, you’re wrong” (p. 97). I never said an institution cannot set its own goals.

In addition, Crain accuses me of not just hating the corporate model but hating it intensely. The fact of the matter is that I do not hate the corporate model. What I do hate—intensely—is predatory capitalism. As long as the corporate model does not have sufficient safeguards against predatory capitalism, this model is open to the abuse that educational integrity and educational values are subordinate to “the bottom line.”

Crain thinks the view I take “negates much good work accomplished over the last decade by faculty senates and councils.” This is nonsense. Shared governance is precisely what I’m upholding and promoting. I criticize AQIP for not focusing specifically on shared governance. When CEOs with no love of education become college presidents or members of boards of education, they have at times applied the corporate model directly to education with disastrous consequences, as James Carlin tried to do as chairman of the Massachusetts State Board of Education.

Carlin wanted to impose business process reengineering (see Michael Hammer’s and James Champy’s *Reengineering the Corporation* and my article, pp. 95-96) directly to the higher education system of Massachusetts. In his own words, “there’s going to be a revolution in higher education. Whether you like it or not, it’s going to be broken apart and put back together differently. It won’t be the same. Why should it be? Why should everything change except for higher education?”¹

Of course, it’s simply not true that everything changes radically the way that Carlin claims. What Carlin—and Crain for that matter—do not want to engage is TQM’s and BPR’s (business process re-engineering) own failure rates, which stand anywhere from 50 percent to 70 percent.²

I am amazed at the persistence of Crain’s enthusiasm for academic capitalism, given the excesses and abuses that may be systemic to the corporate model. Is it any wonder that the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 calls for more effective internal controls, more accountability, and more trans-

parency in corporate governance after examples such as Enron, WorldCom, Halliburton, Adelphia, ImClone, and Tyco International?

The call for more transparency is a call for a greater sense of truth in the corporate model, yet Crain chides me for holding on to truth as the central value that governs the mission of higher education. Indeed, she claims—but gives no evidence—that Steven Crow, director of the Higher Learning Commission, is right when he asserts that the free search for truth in education is no longer a viable option in a democratic society.

Crow's position is blatantly contradictory. On the one hand, he says AQIP wants educational institutions to foster a climate of evidence, factuality, and transparency—a climate of truth. On the other hand, he says that the search for truth is not a viable option for education. With this contradiction, we arrive at the crux of the problem. Is truth a handmaid to the corporate model or is the corporate model itself subject to a greater truth and good that goes beyond the corporate model? The answer seems obvious: The corporate model is not a good in itself; rather, it is an instrumental value, a means toward some greater good. But, as Henry Giroux points out, knowledge within the corporate model is always instrumental and ideologically directed:

Knowledge as capital in the corporate model is privileged as a form of investment in the economy, but appears to have little value when linked to the power of self-definition, social responsibility, or the capacity of individuals to expand the scope of freedom, justice, and the operations of democracy.³

Higher education is the locus where ways of thinking and shared dialogue are learned that question everything—including ideologies, views of the common good, the limits of capitalism, social justice, and conceptions of the self. Crain and Crow seem to be saying that we can't "afford" this view of education anymore; but if the free search for truth is no longer a viable option in a democratic society, we may as well abandon the very idea of America. 

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Quoted in Henry A. Giroux, "Neoliberalism and the Vocationalization of Higher Education" [Web site] available at www.louisville.edu/a-s/english/gta/giroux.html, p. 14 (7 June 2004).
- 2 "End of the Road for TQM" in *Government Executive* (1 July 1997) [Web site] available at www.govexec.com/reinvent/articles/0797fqg3.htm (7 June 2004).
- 3 Henry A. Giroux, "Neoliberalism and the Vocationalization of Higher Education" [Web site] available at www.louisville.edu/a-s/english/gta/giroux.html, p. 13 (7 June 2004).

Frank Edler's article, "Campus Accreditation: Here Come the Corporate Model" addresses an issue which has been around for some time; that is, operating educational institutions more like corporations or businesses. Edler contends that "teaching and learning is a product, and like other products, it is sold to consumers." But ultimately, the real product of a college or university is a student with a degree.

The article also does not explore a key component of all successful corporations or businesses: customer satisfaction. The basic goal of any corporation is to make a profit by giving the customer exactly what he wants, providing it's legal and ethical. That corporation or business may even modify or redesign a product or service just to satisfy the customer. The customer of the college or university is the student, but if we give many of those customer-students what they want, if we modify and redesign our courses or programs just to satisfy that customer-student, it would result in inflated grades, less rigorous courses, and less stringent degree requirements.

A basic, yet key, element of this issue was not evident in Edler's article: *higher education is the only "business" whose customer is also its product.* Because of this, and the points Edler addresses in his article, institutions of higher learning will never be able to completely adopt corporate models.

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