

What Does Bowdoin Teach?

How a Contemporary Liberal Arts College Shapes Students

By Peter Wood and Michael Toscano

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Foreword

In the *Republic*, where Plato attempts to conjure the ideal of the just city, he wrestles with the questions: Who will teach the children? And what will they be taught? Although college students are not children in a legal or behavioral sense, they are still impressionable young men and women shaped by their educational experience. They will not be college students forever. They will become husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, employees, bosses, and citizens. They will make adult decisions about how best to participate in and influence America. I say this because many have forgotten that what is being taught on America's campuses, and who is teaching it, will play a larger role in determining not only the moral and intellectual trajectory of the individuals in the classroom, but the course of America itself.

In this report, Peter Wood and Michael Toscano have painstakingly used Bowdoin College as an example of how many liberal arts colleges fail their students. Bowdoin illustrates the intellectual and moral deficit of the American academy. The curricular offerings and worldview that characterizes Bowdoin College—regarded as one of the finest liberal arts colleges in the country—are in many ways antithetical to the American experiment and the best traditions of learning. Moreover, this study shows how this intellectual climate does not befit the traditions of Bowdoin, a school that has shown itself to be excellent in many other respects.

This report is unique and important in several ways:

The report is perhaps the most deep and specific to date on how progressive ideology has altered the character of American higher education. By focusing on just one college in detail, the authors capture the full context of how advocacy and ideology have significantly displaced the pursuit of truth and the cultivation of character. Their hope is that faculty members, administrators, parents, and yes, students from other colleges, will recognize the less desirable features of Bowdoin College in their own institutions.

The authors have done a remarkable job in showing the inconsistency of Bowdoin in its commitment to ideas of “open-mindedness” and “critical thinking.” These ideas are necessary preconditions for healthy intellectual discourse. But Bowdoin has supplanted the “classical liberal” principles of reasoned argument, the West, the universally true, and the potential for discovering the truth. Instead, its regnant orthodoxies are ideas such as “global citizenship,” “social justice,” and “sustainability.” A free society rests on a commitment to reasoned argument. When illiberal dogma is substituted for reasoned argument, it compromises its own liberal arts principles and erodes the basis for a free society.

This report shows that Bowdoin's curriculum is frequently incoherent and trivial. One course that was ultimately cancelled because of lack of student interest was entitled “Queer Gardens,” a survey of the horticultural achievements of “gay and lesbian gardeners” and a rereading of literary works on gardens from a “queer” perspective. Aside from being a course that, in all likelihood, neither cultivates the principles of critical thinking, nor possesses a canonical set of texts to explain the human experience, it sounds altogether trivial.

The authors show that Bowdoin’s faculty members in the “studies” programs are often appointed more for their skin color, gender, and highly specialized research interests than their ability to teach. The advising system is dysfunctional, and students are generally left to piece together their own educations out of the jumble of courses and ideological themes on offer. History majors at Bowdoin, for instance, are not required to take a single course in American history. And some of these students are the next generation of high school teachers. Perhaps most serious, the academic demands on students outside of class are minimal: students are found to study, on average, a mere seventeen hours per week outside the classroom.

One cannot predict how much, if anything, a Bowdoin graduate will know about the philosophy of Aristotle, the plays of Shakespeare, or the Civil War. All Bowdoin students know something about Joshua Chamberlain, the Bowdoin alumnus and professor of modern languages who became the hero of Gettysburg. His statue adorns the campus; his name appears on several buildings; and he served in later life as president of the college and governor of Maine. But how well Bowdoin students understand the context of his life and his contributions is an open question.

But it is very likely that Bowdoin’s more recent graduates are well-versed in racial grievance, anticapitalism, social justice, and multiculturalism. These perspectives are often the product of identity studies curricula that are so popular on college campuses. These programs undermine the idea of America. Bruce Bawer has written, “[W]ith every kid who emerges from college possessing a diploma—and an idea of America derived not from the values of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution but from the preaching of identity studies—the American miracle fades a bit more into the mists of history.”

Lastly, a word about character education. Bowdoin long ago abdicated from a philosophy of *in loco parentis*, in which a school assumes some responsibility for the cultivation of the student’s moral life. Although Bowdoin still shapes character, it does not actively or intentionally seek to shape *good* character. The college effectively promotes sexual promiscuity among students, fosters a sense of permanent grievance among students (including a disregard for America), and produces a supercilious knowingness among students that too often flatters rather than educates.

I have been thinking, writing, and speaking about education for forty-five years. This spring, I and my coauthor David Wilezol will release *Is College Worth It?* a volume of our own that addresses these issues, as well as the soaring cost of higher education. It is imperative that America recognize the damaging influence that many universities are having on the future of the nation. As Abraham Lincoln said, “The philosophy of the school room in one generation is the philosophy of government in the next.” The harmful real world consequences of substandard higher education are unacceptable. But thanks to Dr. Peter Wood and Mr. Michael Toscano, they are not inevitable.

William Bennett

A Letter from Thomas Klingenstein

April 3, 2013

Dear Bowdoin Alumni:

I am writing to all Bowdoin alumni, but in particular to those over the age of, say, fifty to fifty-five, a line that more or less demarcates old Bowdoin from new. Were you to return to Bowdoin you would find much to remind you of *your* Bowdoin, particularly the camaraderie and loyalty that makes Bowdoin as comforting and bracing as a Maine football Saturday. If you were able to look below the surface, however, you would not recognize much of today's curriculum and student life. Indeed, I think you would find at least some of what happens today at Bowdoin disturbing.

This report is meant to give you that look beneath the surface. Though the view is sometimes fuzzy and often limited, it is nonetheless revealing. To those of my readers who lean to the political left, you will not always agree with my perspective. I ask only that you consider whether it is a legitimate perspective and one to which Bowdoin students ought to be exposed. Whether you agree with my perspective or not, I do not expect anyone to swallow this report whole, but what I do hope is that you will take the diagnosis seriously enough to learn more.

I have been asked by what right I criticize Bowdoin or, for that matter, any college other than my own alma mater (Williams College). I think we all have a civic duty to pay attention to what's going on in our nation's best colleges. Bowdoin carries a public trust, not just because of its nonprofit status, but because of its role in helping to cultivate the leaders of the future. It is my duty, as it is of any citizen, to help ensure that the Republic that has been bequeathed to me be passed to the next generation in as good a condition as it was received.

But why, some have asked, pick on Bowdoin? After all, Bowdoin differs little from other elite colleges. The answer begins with a golf game on a beautiful Maine day—details below. Our real purpose is not to evaluate Bowdoin, but to evaluate higher education using Bowdoin as a representative example. We do not claim that Bowdoin is materially different than other wealthy elite schools.

Some will also ask whether this report is simply my vendetta against President Barry Mills because I took offense at remarks he made at his 2010 convocation address. This, by the way, is the storyline being promoted on the Bowdoin campus. President Mills's comments did indeed offend me. No one likes being portrayed, in so many words, as a racist. But I responded at the time and that was that. The project that resulted in this report came about because curiosity replaced anger. I embarked on it because President Mills characterized my views in a context of a much larger cause. President Mills's characterization of my views occurred in a context that

allowed me to open up a discussion on issues of paramount interest: the defense of the West and the liberal arts.

These are the central concerns of the National Association of Scholars (on whose board I sit) as well my own personal multi-decade interest. I chair the board of the Claremont Institute, which is committed to recovering the West through the political philosophy of the American Founding and the statesmanship of Abraham Lincoln. I am someone who enjoys his privacy, but the desire for privacy must at times give way to public concerns. Accordingly, I funded this study of Bowdoin. In this case, I was the only one who had the standing to respond to President Mills.

Respectfully,

Tom Klingenstein

The Evidence of Things Unnoticed

An Interpretive Preface to the National Association of Scholars' Report,

What Does Bowdoin Teach?

How a Contemporary Liberal Arts College Shapes Students

by Peter Wood

This report is something that, as far as we know, has never been tried before.¹ It is an in-depth study of one particular college based on documentary sources, an ethnography of an academic culture, its worldview, customs, and values. We have three aims. The first is to provide an accurate, vivid, and up-to-date account of what Bowdoin attempts to teach its students. The second is to analyze whether that teaching has been compromised by contemporary ideology. We conclude that it has. Our third purpose is to look at elite higher education in America using Bowdoin as a representative example.²

Of the 230 or so colleges that fit that description, why Bowdoin? The correct answer is happenstance—a chance game of golf in 2010 involving two men who had never met: philanthropist Tom Klingenstein and Bowdoin president Barry Mills. President Mills, in his annual convocation speech, offered a graphic description of his view of what had happened on the golf course that day. Klingenstein, not named in the speech, recognized himself, took exception, and wrote an essay published in the Winter 2010–Spring 2011 *Claremont Review of Books*. The heart of the dispute was whether Bowdoin (and higher education in general) should do more to include the ideas of thinkers, including American conservatives, who dissent from prevailing progressive political orthodoxies.

To capture these orthodoxies, we cast a wide net to include presidential speeches, pronouncements from deans, formal statements of principles, reports with the imprimatur of the faculty acting as a body, the practical rules embodied in college policies, and the decisions (including punishments) based on those policies. When employing such evidence we refer to “official” Bowdoin. Of course, at Bowdoin, like at any institution, practice often veers from

¹The body of the full report is co-authored by Peter Wood and Michael Toscano. Dr. Wood, president of the National Association of Scholars, is a social anthropologist. He was a tenured member of the anthropology department at Boston University, where he also served as associate provost and the president's chief of staff. He also served as provost of The King's College, New York City. He is the author of *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003) and *A Bee in the Mouth: Anger in America Now* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006). Mr. Toscano is a 2008 graduate of The King's College, where he received a bachelor's degree in politics, philosophy, and economics.

²More than nineteen million students currently pursue higher education in the United States at close to four thousand colleges and universities. About five hundred thousand students attend the 228 colleges that until recently were called “selective liberal arts colleges.” The number “228” is taken from the 2000 edition of *The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education*, and represents the total number of colleges then classified as “Liberal Arts I.” Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, foreword by Lee S. Shulman, *The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education* (Menlo Park, CA: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2001), 20, http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/downloads/2000_edition_data_printable.pdf.

official prescription. Throughout the study, we keep as close a watch as possible on the gaps between the official side of things and the actual goings-on, though our emphasis on the former introduces certain limitations.

We assess Bowdoin from the perspective of a traditional understanding of the liberal arts in America, with its emphasis on reasoned argument, the West, and a belief in the possibility of discovering the truth. Our focus is on the ideology that permeates Bowdoin and has drastically altered its conception of a liberal arts education. This is hardly an exhaustive look at Bowdoin. Bowdoin remains an excellent college in many respects, but it is different in important respects from what it was two generations ago and many of those changes, perhaps most, have not been for the better.

This preface differs from the report. The reader will find in the report a systematic exposition of the facts. This preface, by contrast, offers our interpretation of those facts. In the report, we reserve judgment. In this preface, we synthesize—and we judge.

In the body of the report, President Mills is one figure among many, but in this preface he features prominently. This is only because his speeches and behavior illustrate many of those problems that we chose to emphasize in the preface. We stress that Mills did not cause these problems; he simply reflects them. Like most college presidents, Mills has little influence on the curriculum and student life, which is primarily shaped by faculty, students, and contemporary American culture. It is true that presidential speeches tend to be platitudinous (and not much listened to) but it is precisely the platitudes of a given culture that reveal abiding concerns and prevailing norms.

I. Critical Thinking and Global Citizenship

Official Bowdoin projects two broad purposes: it aims to teach students to think critically and it aims to help them to develop into good citizens. Our claim that critical thinking is a Bowdoin goal is not likely to be contested by either the Bowdoin community or outside observers. Bowdoin is explicit and emphatic in its promotion of this goal. The first requirement for critical thinking is a genuinely open mind. “Openness” and “critical thinking” aren’t quite the same thing, of course. The first is really a precondition of the second. But for the moment we will treat them as near synonyms and bring in other requirements of critical thinking only as needed.

Our second claim—that Bowdoin seeks to develop its students into “good citizens”—isn’t quite as self-evident as is the goal of critical thinking. Often this purpose is promoted indirectly, when Bowdoin supports multicultural student clubs, for example, or when President Mills interprets 9/11 primarily as an opportunity to understand other cultures. The goal of citizenship is, however, often expressed more directly, as President Mills did in his 2010 convocation address:

A Bowdoin education is at the heart of this nation’s democratic traditions and central to our democratic future. We should reject with confidence any assertion to the contrary. One of Bowdoin’s goals is to help develop good American citizens.³

What exactly did President Mills mean when he spoke of “this nation’s democratic traditions”? He didn’t explain in his own words but quoted approvingly, exclusively, and at length from University of Chicago law professor Martha Nussbaum, who is a leading advocate of the ideal of “global citizenship.” This understanding of “citizenship” emphasizes identity politics, group rights, environmental justice, and commitment to transnational institutions and perspectives.

Global citizenship sounds attractive to many because it suggests a kind of open-mindedness toward other cultures and a refusal to be limited by one’s own. But this appearance of open-mindedness is illusory. Global citizenship as a doctrine (as opposed to familiarity with non-Western cultures) assumes a great deal that gets in the way of intellectual openness.

The two Bowdoin goals—global citizenship and openness—actually push against each other. Openness requires skepticism and a sincere willingness to look for hidden assumptions, but Bowdoin’s understanding of global citizenship requires that some very large questions be settled in advance. A commitment to global citizenship requires a commitment to diversity (in its current understanding, the notion that each of us is defined in the most meaningful ways by the group to which we belong) and to the racial preferences that follow from diversity; to multiculturalism (all cultures are equal); to the idea that gender and social norms are all simply social constructs (an assumption that justifies virtually unlimited government intervention necessary to achieve the global citizen’s understanding of sexual justice); and to “sustainability” (which assumes that free market economic systems, and the materialistic, bourgeois values that drive them, are destroying the planet). These are notions that are not meaningfully “open to debate” at Bowdoin; indeed, a *commitment* to global citizenship *requires* that they not be open to debate. Students are encouraged to “think critically” about anything that threatens the college’s dogmas on diversity, multiculturalism, gender, and sustainability, etc., but, for the most part, not to think critically about those dogmas themselves.

II. Varieties of Closed-Mindedness

(1) The Boorish Conservative

Bowdoin believes that it exemplifies open-mindedness, but it is in fact a community that shuts out many legitimate ideas. The closed-mindedness of Bowdoin was inadvertently illustrated by a student who emailed Klingenstein. The email began, “It took balls for someone of your conservative views to speak at Bowdoin.” As the body of the email showed, the student,

³Barry Mills, “Convocation 2010 Address,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, September 2, 2010, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2010/convocation-2010.shtml>.

though skeptical of Klingenstein’s views, intended this as a compliment. But what the student missed was that his compliment inadvertently confirmed our contention that Bowdoin is, in important respects, closed-minded. Why should it take “balls” for someone of Klingenstein’s views to speak at Bowdoin?

The diversity doctrine is one example of a subject where open-mindedness is discouraged, as President Mills’s 2010 convocation address illustrates. In this speech, he first called for exposure to conservative points of view. He then told his story about the wealthy conservative who, he said, interrupted his back swing by yelling out: “I would never support Bowdoin—you are a ridiculous liberal school that brings all the wrong students to campus for all the wrong reasons.”⁴ “Wrong students” almost certainly has to be understood as a thinly-veiled way of saying “black students and other minorities.” “Wrong reasons” may refer to quotas. According to this version of events, the conservative was a man of poor sportsmanship—interrupting a golf swing is a serious offense—uncouth behavior, and probably racist views. The unnamed boor may be taken as exemplifying the category of political conservatives who have no legitimate place at Bowdoin. The speech, with its use of ridicule, was an exercise in drawing a boundary between ideas that are to be considered commendable at Bowdoin and those that are off-limits. The banishment was rather brazen, coming in the midst of a speech ostensibly welcoming conservatives to the campus mix. But no one noticed the contradiction.

That is the problem: such contradictions go unnoticed. And they go unnoticed because at Bowdoin, and places like it, there are precious few people who can point them out.

(2) Gender Is Under Construction

Not noticing is more serious than the Bowdoin community realizes. Bowdoin ought to teach students the discipline of reasoned argument and the habit of mind that reflexively looks for reasoned argument. Regrettably, Bowdoin too often fails to cultivate that. For example, the 2012–2013 *Bowdoin College Catalogue* explains:

Courses in Gender and Women’s Studies investigate the experience of women and men in light of the social construction of gender and its meaning across cultures and historic periods. Gender construction is explored as an institutionalized means of structuring inequality and dominance.⁵

Here Bowdoin flatly announces that gender is a social construct, the sole purpose of which is to subjugate women. Is gender, according to this view, *entirely* a social construct? “In light of the social construction of gender” seems to say so, and at the very least it forecloses any interest in other possibilities, such as biology. Individual courses on gender at Bowdoin are built on these assumptions, as is almost all public discussion of the matter.

⁴Ibid.

⁵*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 173.

By answering elemental questions in advance, the gender and women’s studies statement forecloses alternatives. And in summarily settling these elemental questions, important political issues such as women in combat, abortion, employment law, and gay marriage are settled as well. The assumption that gender is a social construct licenses—and perhaps requires—government to attempt to reconstruct gender relations along whatever lines it deems most suitable.

For the quoted description of gender and women’s studies to make it into Bowdoin’s *Catalogue* for many years running, and for it to appear on the Bowdoin website as well, means that it passed through many layers of review and approval. Apparently the tendentious claims that the program presents triggered no sense among Bowdoin’s responsible authorities that anything was amiss in laying forth declarations that run profoundly against the principles of open-mindedness and critical thinking.

Again, one might find this declaration—so evidentially closed-minded—rather brazen, but like Mills’s dismissal of conservatives just after welcoming them to Bowdoin, no one notices.

(3) The Triumph of Identity

What happened with women’s studies began decades before. The transformation of the liberal arts at Bowdoin into a platform for political advocacy started with Afro-American studies (since renamed Africana studies) in 1969. It emerged from a combination of impulses to change the world rather than solely study it. The 2012–2013 *Bowdoin College Catalogue* indicates that the program “grew out of the African American freedom movement of the 1960s.”⁶ According to the March 17, 1969, minutes of Bowdoin’s Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee, Afro-American studies was conceived to create slots for black faculty members who could assist black students: “The Director of the program ought [to] be black and black faculty ought [to] be recruited for it.”⁷ The 1971 “Proposed Revision of the Bowdoin Afro-American Studies Program” expanded on the idea that the program could serve to promote social change while assisting black students. It extolled the program’s potential to promote a “process of re-socialization and socialization of Americans” and fulfill “a psychological need on the part of Black students.”⁸

What started in Afro-American studies set in motion the larger “studies” movement. In addition to the two already noted studies programs, Bowdoin now offers gay and lesbian studies, Asian studies, Latin American studies, and environmental studies. These six programs contrast to

⁶Ibid., 40.

⁷“Afro-American Studies at Bowdoin,” minutes of the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee, Bowdoin College, April 2, 1969, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 5, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁸“Proposed Revision of the Bowdoin Afro-American Studies Program,” Task Force to Committee on Afro-American Studies, Bowdoin College, May 24, 1971, 4, catalog no. 3.1.1, box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

varying degrees with the rest of Bowdoin’s curriculum. The studies programs, which we cover in detail in the body of the report, continue to advocate for the groups they examine. All of them (with the possible exception of environmental studies) are designed to advance the project of making the student body more diverse and to recruit faculty members on the basis of their “social identities,” not just their scholarly accomplishments and ability to teach.

Courses listed in the studies programs now comprise approximately 18 percent of the curriculum, but that is the tip of the iceberg. Eighteen percent of the curriculum may seem a small figure, but not if the proper percent is zero. The ideology that characterizes these programs has seeped into many courses in other departments. The political views the studies programs explicitly advocate are seldom rebutted on campus. In other words, liberal political advocates have their say but conservatives, for the most part, do not. Moreover, student life is saturated with multicultural clubs such as the Africa Alliance, the African American Society, the Asian Students Association, Anokha (South Asian students association), the Bowdoin Haitian Alliance, the Circolo Italiano, the International Club, the Korean American Student Association, the Latino American Student Organization, and the Native American Students Association. By contrast, only four student clubs devoted to academic pursuits exist: the Bowdoin Society of Physics Students, the Peucinian Society (a debate club), Robocup (a robotics club), and German Club (a club for language practice not based on ethnicity).

Multiculturalism is also heavily programmed into the extracurricular schedule with events such as the spring 2012 “Beyond the Bowdoin Hello: Ask, Listen, Engage,” inaugurated to spur a wider “dialogue on issues of identity and diversity, both in the classroom and in our wider community.”⁹ This event stretched over many days and enjoyed the cosponsorship of the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, the Office of Multicultural Student Programs, Residential Life, Student Activities, and most notably the Office of the President as well as several academic departments and programs—Africana Studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies, Gender and Women’s Studies, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and the Department of Philosophy—and a number of student-led organizations, Bowdoin Student Government among others.

One way to get a sense of the nature and influence of the studies programs is to take a glance at one of Bowdoin’s few academic requirements, “First-Year Seminars.” These courses, according to administration pronouncements, are designed to teach writing and critical thinking skills, and to provide a gateway to the academic departments. Every student must take one of these courses. The First-Year Seminars offered in fall 2012 as listed in the *Bowdoin College Catalogue* were:

Affirmative Action and U.S. Society
Fictions of Freedom
Racism

Modern Western Prostitutes
Women in the European Union
Globalizing India

⁹Beyond the Bowdoin Hello: Ask, Listen, Engage, site accessed January 24, 2012. The webpage that fully described this event is no longer available on the Internet. For an involved student’s description of the event, see “Nylea Bivins ’12 on Getting Beyond the Bowdoin Hello,” Bowdoin College, *Campus News*, January 25, 2012, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1bowdoincampus/009143.shtml>.

Music and Race in Latin America African	Art and the Environment.: 1960 to the Present
Material Life in Early America	Beyond Pocahontas: Native American Stereotypes
Great Issues in Science	Ancient Democracy and Critics
Understanding Theater and Dance	Living Downstream
The Art of the Deal	Queer Gardens
Hawthorne	Fan Fictions and Cult Classics
The Real Life of Literature	Fact and Fiction
Sexual Life of Colonialism	Public Health in Europe and U.S.
The Pursuit of Peace	The Korean War
Global Media and Politics	Power and Participation in American Politics
Exercises in Political Theory	Political Leadership
Human Being and Citizen	Utopian Communities, 1630-1997
Consumerism in Early-Modern Europe	A Philosopher's Dozen
Intro to the Brain and Behavior	Fantasy and Satire: E. Central Europe
African American Children's Literature	

Some of these courses are solid; yet some catch the eye as distinctly odd course offerings for college freshmen, or perhaps any undergraduate: “Sexual Life of Colonialism,” “Modern Western Prostitutes,” “Native American Stereotypes”?

One First-Year Seminar offered in fall 2012 but struck from the list because too few Bowdoin students signed up for it was “Queer Gardens,” which:

Explores how the garden in Western literature and art serves as a space for desire. Pays special attention to the link between gardens and transgression. Also considers how gardens become eccentric spaces and call into question distinctions between nature and culture. Examines the work of gay and lesbian gardeners and traces how marginal identities find expression in specific garden spaces.¹⁰

Courses like these illuminate an important pedagogical problem. Critical thinking has to be thinking about something in particular, whether it is Euclidian geometry, the characters in *Middlemarch*, the tactics of the civil rights movement, Native American stereotypes, the sexual life of colonialism, or modern Western prostitutes. As indicated by this list of required courses that are designed to teach critical thinking as well as by official statements, Bowdoin has adopted the position that any subject is as good as any other when it comes to learning how to think critically. But “Queer Gardens” does not teach critical thinking as well as Plato’s *Republic*. We can say this with confidence because “Queer Gardens” has at best a very limited community of discourse and no canon of works that embody exemplary achievement in the difficult dialogic task of critical thinking.

¹⁰Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013, 160, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/catalogue/courses/first-year-seminars/courses.shtml>.

(4) Immunity to Criticism

It is very difficult to maintain an environment of openness without frequent exposure to competing ideas. Progressive ideas are not likely to be subjected to serious challenge unless there are conservatives around. (The reverse would be just as true.) Without conservatives the not-noticeable problem sets in. At Bowdoin the number of conservative faculty members is miniscule. We estimate that four or five out of approximately 182 full-time faculty members might be described as politically conservative.¹¹ Bowdoin doesn't dispute that the imbalance is extreme; instead it argues that its liberal faculty faithfully represents many views, including conservative ones. President Mills and others say that the views of conservatives *are* represented on campus. For example, in his 2005 baccalaureate address President Mills unconditionally denied that Bowdoin suffered from liberal bias or intellectual homogeneity: "There is not a single point of view at Bowdoin. There are many."¹² In each of Mills's commencement addresses between 2009 and 2012 he said "there is a perception that there is a dominant culture or political persuasion on campus,"¹³ but it is just that, a "perception." Mills continued: "You [graduates] all may be surprised to learn that Bowdoin is truly a place of real diversity in the broadest sense as compared to the communities you may now choose to live."¹⁴ In a *Bowdoin Orient* article titled "100% of Faculty Donations Go to Obama," dean of academic affairs Cristle Collins Judd wrote, "We expect that individual political opinions do not stifle the education in the classroom and that all viewpoints are welcome and respected."¹⁵

Prof. Henry Laurence went even further in a January 30, 2004, *Bowdoin Orient* piece. He rejected the accusation that Bowdoin's political homogeneity threatens the integrity of its curriculum: "criticism of the preponderance of Democrats among Bowdoin's faculty is based on an assumption [that liberals cannot reflect conservative views] that is intellectually bankrupt, professionally insulting and, fortunately, wildly inaccurate."¹⁶

Bankrupt, insulting, and wildly inaccurate? Those are strong words. Most of us can do a pretty good job of summarizing views other than our own, though giving a fair-minded account of views that we think are profoundly mistaken can be quite difficult. Would you want to have a Marxist as your sole source of information on the stock market? A passionate atheist your sole

¹¹Prof. Jean Yarbrough estimates that six or fewer Bowdoin faculty members could be considered political conservatives in "Bowdoin Should Examine Its Lack of Diversity," *Bowdoin Orient*, April 22, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6388>. Prof. Christian Potholm is quoted as estimating that there are "3 or 4" conservative faculty members at Bowdoin in Priya Sridhar, "Republican Professors Are Scant at Bowdoin," *Bowdoin Orient*, December 5, 2003, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2003-12-05/news02.htm>. The number "182 faculty members" comes from Bowdoin's Common Data Set 2011–2012, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/images/cds2011-12.pdf>.

¹²Barry Mills, "Baccalaureate '05," Bowdoin College, Office of the President, May 27, 2005, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2005/baccalaureate-05.shtml>.

¹³Barry Mills, "Commencement 2012 Address: President Barry Mills '72," *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, May 26, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/commencement-2012-address-president-barry-mills-72/>.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Emma Peters, "100% of Faculty Donations Go to Obama," *Bowdoin Orient*, December 7, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7816>.

¹⁶Henry Laurence, "The Non-Issue of Political Diversity on College Campuses," *Bowdoin Orient*, January 30, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-01-30/opinion02.htm>.

source of information on religion? Even if such a person made an earnest effort to avoid bias, you might reasonably suspect that the account falls short in some important ways.

We need not, however, speculate about Prof. Laurence’s claim that Bowdoin liberals do a perfectly adequate job in covering conservative views. The evidence shows plainly that they don’t. Large portions of the curriculum advocate for liberal political causes. None advocates for conservative political causes—nor would we want any to do so. Our preferred solution is a curriculum that shuns advocacy in favor of education.

But perhaps the most telling evidence about the ability of Bowdoin faculty as a whole to represent fairly and accurately the views of conservatives is what some individual faculty members have to say. In 2004, when Bowdoin was in the midst of an earlier controversy over the scarcity of conservatives on its faculty, Marc Hetherington, then assistant professor of government, explained, “The reason is supply; conservatives are much less likely to pursue a Ph.D. than people of other political stripes.” Hetherington attributed this shortage to conservatives failing to “place the same emphasis on the accumulation of knowledge [as] liberals do.”¹⁷

Both historically and today, conservatives are at least as committed to scholarship as individuals who espouse other political outlooks. Dismissing conservatives as less interested than liberals in the accumulation of knowledge hardly sounds like an introduction to a fair-minded representation of conservatives’ views. Likewise, in the context of a debate on liberal bias, Prof. Patrick Rael of the history department referred to conservative Bowdoin students who had advocated for an “Academic Bill of Rights” as “McCarthyite...anti-democratic...and Far Right.”¹⁸ Prof. Laurence, quoted above, went on to declare that having a political imbalance among faculty was no more significant than having an imbalance “between Red Sox and Yankees fans.”¹⁹

Prof. Laurence trivializes a profoundly important matter. The differences between conservatives and liberals bear on key choices about life, shape views on social and economic issues, and influence voting. Preference for baseball franchises? Not so much. Such airy dismissals, however, seemed to satisfy many Bowdoin students. For instance, thirteen students signing a statement in the *Bowdoin Orient* as “Bowdoin College Democrats” declared:

We believe the vast majority of professors are responsible enough to insure that their own political biases do not adversely affect the way they teach.²⁰

¹⁷Marc J. Hetherington, “Conservatives in Short Supply in Academia—for a Reason,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 30, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-01-30/opinion01.htm>.

¹⁸Patrick Rael, “Political Control Hurts Academia,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 2, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1386>.

¹⁹Laurence, “Non-Issue of Political Diversity.”

²⁰Bowdoin College Democrats, “Linhart Off Base,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, February 6, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-02-06/ltr01.htm>.

They also declared that the student body prefers the intellectual modes of liberal professors to conservative professors:

Modern conservatives often have very simplified world views and see things in black and white....Modern liberalism advocates a much more balanced view of the world, and we believe most students prefer this more complex perspective.²¹

(5) Voting Instructions

Another example of a lack of openness occurred two weeks before the November 2012 election in which the state of Maine had a ballot measure on same-sex marriage. On October 25, 2012, President Mills published a letter in the *Bowdoin Orient* urging students to vote in favor of gay marriage.²² He asserted that “our democracy must protect the rights of all citizens” and that he had been “stirred by the deep hurt, disillusionment, and alienation that grips those who are denied a legal right of commitment to those they love.”²³ But Mills offered no argument as to what constitutes a right. His reflections on the “deep hurt” of gay couples amounted to an emotional appeal, not a defense of a proposition. His argument was simply an assertion, an act of will.

President Mills in this instance used the authority of his office to advance a political cause on a matter about which he had strong feelings. His letter acknowledged in a way that he was improperly crossing a boundary. He declared, “I set forth my views as a private citizen and resident of Brunswick, Maine,” rather than as president of Bowdoin. But he then proceeded to appeal to students’ loyalty to Bowdoin as a reason to join him in voting in favor of same-sex marriage:

I am honored to lead an institution that is nearly as old as our nation itself—a college devoted unambiguously to providing opportunity to those willing to work hard whatever their means, background, or personal beliefs. This access to opportunity and equal protection guides our college because it also defines America.²⁴

Mills’s partisan letter was a misuse of his office and a conspicuous failure to model critical thinking. But this discrepancy between Bowdoin principle and Bowdoin practice appears to have gone mostly unnoticed at Bowdoin itself, or at least it provoked little comment. The discrepancy was obscured by ideological conformity: 92 percent of Bowdoin students favored same-sex marriage.²⁵ Given this near unanimity, one wonders at the purpose of Mills’s impassioned plea.

²¹Ibid.

²²Barry Mills, “Now’s the Time to Stand Up for Civil Rights and Freedoms in Maine: Vote ‘Yes’ on Question 1,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, October 25, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7583>.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Garrett Casey, “76 Percent of Students to Vote Obama, Poll Finds,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 2, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7668>.

Homosexuality provides grist for another example of the lack of openness. In fall 2011 the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship sponsored, and Bowdoin funded, an event where a local pastor explained his interpretation of the Biblical view on same-sex marriage. Within minutes of the beginning of the sermon, two students stormed out. They then filed a protest with the associate dean of multicultural student programs, who immediately and retroactively revoked funding for the event. The dean's office then insisted that the college was committed to a free exchange of ideas:

I want to be absolutely clear that I absolutely support BCF [the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship] to give whatever message they feel is the right one for their faith; that said, there is a difference between your right to say anything and the College's need to fund it.²⁶

The story has a few twists and turns (see the relevant sections in the full report), but this does not alter our conclusion that openness was compromised. The student protest should have been dismissed out of hand and the students informed that tolerance is a two-way street requiring thick skin, that they were free to protest in any civil way they wished, but that the dean's office couldn't comment or interfere without chilling free speech.

At some point closed-mindedness becomes a habit. Take global warming. Mills signed the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, wedding Bowdoin to the belief that a crisis in *anthropogenic* (man-made) global warming is an established fact—not just probable but certain. But what if it turns out not to be a fact? How easy will it be for a Bowdoin scientist or student to put forth views that oppose the official Bowdoin position? Closed-mindedness knows no stopping point. Bowdoin has similarly staked out fixed positions on other issues, including the legitimacy of racial preferences in college admissions (Mills helped to draft an amicus brief in the 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* case). Again, when Bowdoin takes an official position on a political matter, opposing views are discouraged.

(6) **Disabling the West**

Openness (and more inclusively “critical thinking”) requires a commitment to the West. The term “critical thinking” refers to a human capacity, but it is a capacity that developed into a disciplined approach to ideas in a specific historical context and one that remains characteristic of the West. A commitment to critical thinking is a commitment to a Western mode of rational inquiry, regardless of whether this commitment is acknowledged. Moreover, the assumptions and values of Bowdoin students have been formed by the Western tradition. Freeing students from the shackles of their own thought requires study of the West, as well, of course, as the non-West.

But official Bowdoin on the whole shows little interest in the West. In part, this is because focusing on the West risks elevating the West over other cultures. That, in turn, works

²⁶Melissa Wiley, “BCF Chapel Service Sparks Controversy, Leads to Withdrawal of Funds,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 23, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6592>.

against the all-cultures-are-equal belief that is part of the quest for the cosmopolitan outlook of global citizenship.

Today, Bowdoin places little emphasis on the nation's claims to distinction: its founding focus on human equality and freedom; its history of economic opportunity, invention, and free enterprise; and its willingness to sacrifice to secure the freedom of others. Around campus "American exceptionalism" is a term of derision; a student who expresses such views in a tone other than mockery is reflexively attacked.²⁷ So there is no confusion, we say plainly that it is not only appropriate but necessary that the ideas embodied in the term "American exceptionalism" be challenged through reasoned argument, but reasoned argument also requires the opportunity to defend these ideas.

To say that the nation's claims to distinction are little emphasized at Bowdoin is not to say they are never emphasized. Some members of the economics department defend free market principles in the spirit of the liberal arts. Mills's speeches often reflect an appreciation of the benefits of capitalism. Bowdoin faculty members can, and many do, go their own way. Still, in its overall tenor Bowdoin is cool to the idea that free market capitalism is better than the alternatives in promoting prosperity and social justice.

In place of the traditional focus on the West at Bowdoin, the emphasis today tends to be on diversity and multiculturalism, which are embedded in a narrative in which the United States conspicuously and perennially falls short of its ideals. Students too often learn to concentrate their critical doubts on what they come to see as America's false promises, and at the same time join their enthusiasm to an alternative vision in which "citizenship" is reconstructed as loyalty to the norms of racial justice, gender equity, multiculturalism, etc.

Bowdoin turns aside from most of the historic content of American citizenship and has no curricular requirements that center on the American founding or the history of the nation. Bowdoin does, however, require all students to gain a "critical understanding of the world outside of the United States" via its "International Perspectives" distribution requirement. As for the United States itself, the nation is dissolved into its constituent ethnic and other social groups in the "Exploring Social Differences" requirement.

While the government department offers ample opportunity to study American political thought, in the history department there are no courses devoted to American political, military, diplomatic, or intellectual history except those that deal with some group aspect of America. For example, there is "The History of African Americans, 1619 to 1865" and "The History of African Americans from 1865 to the Present." There is no comparable sequence on America, although

²⁷“He ridiculed me, on the very first day of classes, for proclaiming that I was taking his class because ‘I love America.’” So Bowdoin student Steven Robinson commented in the *Bowdoin Orient* in reply to a letter to the editor from the professor in question. Patrick Rael, “Yarborough Inaccurately Depicts College Diversity,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, April 29, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6428>. When the topic of American exceptionalism comes up, a more typical response is that of *Bowdoin Orient* columnist Caitlin Hurwit, who stated: “American exceptionalism, then, is a rather meaningless turn of phrase. Patriotism is one thing, but an insistence on America’s continued superiority is another entirely.” Caitlin Hurwit, “Patriotism without Exceptionalism,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 26, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5094>.

the department does offer “Colonial America and the Atlantic World, 1607–1763” and “American Society in the New Nation, 1763–1840.” Both are “Exploring Social Differences” courses that emphasize social history. “Colonial America and the Atlantic World,” for example, deals with “European, Native American, and African cultures, and their separate, combined, and often contested contributions to a new ‘provincial,’ increasingly stratified (both socially and economically), and regionally disparate culture.”²⁸

History majors at Bowdoin are not required to take a single course in American history; yet they are required to take several courses in non-Western history.

The government department is a significant enough exception, not just in its commitment to the West, to warrant comment. While this department has not escaped the Bowdoin zeitgeist, there is ample exposure to classical liberal ideas, ones that today we misguidedly call “conservative.” More Bowdoin students enroll in government than in any other department and that, we suspect, is no accident. Government is popular likely because, more than elsewhere, students find the intellectual nourishment that satisfies the human longing for knowledge and understanding. A First-Year Seminar course description from the government department presents a broad philosophical horizon:

An introduction to the fundamental issues of political philosophy: human nature, the relationship between individual and political community, the nature of justice, the place of virtue, the idea of freedom, and the role of history.²⁹

By contrast, here is the course description of a First-Year Seminar taught by a member of the German department and cross-listed with both gay and lesbian studies and gender and women’s studies:

Explores the myriad ways that prostitutes have been represented in modern Western culture from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present...and examines prostitution as a complex urban phenomenon and a vehicle through which artists and writers grapple with issues of labor, morality, sexuality, and gender roles.³⁰

(7) Exceptionalisms

The lack of attention to America and the West not only impairs critical thinking, it weakens sentimental and reasoned attachment to country. Over its long history Bowdoin emphasized citizenship in one form or another. Only recently has it disdained nationalism and American exceptionalism.

²⁸*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 205.

²⁹“GOV 28, ‘Human Being and Citizen,’” *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 164.

³⁰“GER 27, ‘From Flowers of Evil to Pretty Women: Prostitutes in Modern Western Culture,’” *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 163.

At Bowdoin, America is not exceptional, but Bowdoin itself is. A common theme of President Mills's major speeches over the past eleven years is that Bowdoin is uniquely good at upholding the liberal arts tradition:

Few institutions are able to claim and articulate their guiding principles as clearly and genuinely as Bowdoin. This is one reason for the palpable sense of pride at Bowdoin today—a pride in what we are, what we stand for, and how we are different. It is one important aspect of our exceptionalism—an exceptionalism built from a strong, clear, and enduring sense of purpose and mission, and an understanding that our commitment to the liberal arts model and to the common good sets us apart. But the exceptionalism of Bowdoin extends well beyond our founding concepts. It is also defined by what we are today.³¹

Compare Mills's praise of Bowdoin to his impromptu response to the terrorists on 9/11:

Thank you for being here this afternoon on this very tragic day. Ours is a world that is not always just or fair. Tragedy is all too familiar around the world. We, in our recent past, in America have been fortunate for the most part to be spared much of that tragedy on our own land, except of course for the tragedy of the first World Trade Center bombing and Oklahoma City. Terrorism in our own backyards has always haunted us—now it is very much a reality and will likely change our lives forever. As I walked across campus today I thought of Ambassador Pickering's talk on American diplomacy, so rational, thoughtful and balanced. Then as I ventured back to my office to see the flag at half-staff and the Bowdoin war memorial I remembered that the world is not so rational or balanced. We remember that we at Bowdoin above all stand for what is just and right. Now is a time for us to stand together and talk—support each other. This is not a time to be alone—mutual support is essential. Our prayers and thoughts are with all of you.³²

Mills was clearly grieved by what had happened and it is understandable that his first thoughts were for the Bowdoin community. Yet from this distance the speech seems remarkably silent about the attack on his country. The American flag at half-mast reminds him only that the world is irrational. He considers that "*we at Bowdoin* above all stand for what is just and right" (emphasis added). There is no word about what America stands for; indeed, no word about America at all. His reflex on that day was to reaffirm the justice of Bowdoin and summon the Bowdoin community to moral unity, with no word about the larger situation.

For contrast, consider how an earlier president of Bowdoin, William DeWitt Hyde (1885–1917), responded to the entry of America into World War I:

³¹Barry Mills, "Baccalaureate '08," Bowdoin College, Office of the President, May 23, 2008, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2008/baccalaureate-08.shtml>.

³²Barry Mills, "September 11 Campus Meeting," Bowdoin College, September 11, 2001, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2001/sept-11-all-campus.shtml>.

Rather than live ourselves, or leave our brothers of the European democracies to live, in such a world as a victorious enemy would make, we throw into the fateful scales of war the whole weight of our resources; the full strength of our sons.³³

In his inaugural address on October 27, 2001—six weeks after 9/11—President Mills returned to the multicultural theme. He began by recalling “a young Iranian student, sitting up there in the balcony” on 9/11, who “reminded us quite rightly about differences, understanding, and respect.” Mills connected 9/11 with times of “transition in [Bowdoin’s] college leadership,” such as the inauguration of Samuel Harris in 1867, “as the nation struggled to recover from the Civil War.”³⁴ This seems a pretty small circle of reference for a national tragedy. His speech ended as it had begun, with appeals to multiculturalism.

Initially the tragedy confirmed for President Mills the central tenets of a Bowdoin education: the need for diversity and global citizenship. Mills’s remarks on the tenth anniversary of 9/11, however, suggest a change of tone and emphasis. He said, “[W]e are a resilient country and a resourceful people” who “adhered to our principles and values” through the ordeal. He also praised those “who heeded the call for action by enlisting in the military.”³⁵

(8) Shadow Boxing

The difficulty of striking a better balance of liberals and conservatives on the Bowdoin faculty remains an issue over which official Bowdoin occasionally frets but never takes seriously. An oft-repeated theme is that it would be a terrible thing to permit or encourage search committees to inquire about the political orientations of candidates, because doing so would “politicize” faculty recruitment. No one, as far as we know, has argued that Bowdoin should inquire into candidates’ politics or that recruitment should be politicized, so these declarations appear to be aimed at warding off imaginary dangers. But they do leave the discussion stuck on the theme that nothing practical can be done.

Former dean for academic affairs Craig McEwen said, “We do not ask job candidates about their political affiliations or views, so they play no role in our selection of candidates.”³⁶ This is disingenuous. Bowdoin in other circumstances would not equate the absence of an explicit question to mean an absence of discrimination. In Bowdoin’s “Faculty Recruitment Procedures,” for instance, the Office of the Dean for Academic Affairs explicitly reminds search committees to be aware of “unexamined bias” toward minority candidates.³⁷ The procedures

³³Quoted in Herbert Ross Brown, *Sills of Bowdoin: The Life of Kenneth Charles Morton Sills, 1879–1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 337.

³⁴Barry Mills, “Inauguration Address,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, October 27, 2001, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2001/inauguration-address.shtml>.

³⁵Barry Mills, “September 11 Anniversary Observance Remarks,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, September 11, 2011, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2011/september-11-anniversary-observance-remarks.shtml>.

³⁶Sridhar, “Republican Professors.”

³⁷“Faculty Recruitment Procedures 2012–2013,” Bowdoin College, Dean for Academic Affairs, 5, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/departments/chairs/pdf/faculty-recruiting-memo.pdf>.

note, and quite correctly, that some of the faculty may simply be unaware of their own bias, which is why Bowdoin takes extraordinary steps to ensure that inadvertent discrimination does not fence out minority and women candidates. Other steps Bowdoin takes to overcome bias include requiring a member of the Faculty Diversity Committee to sit in on every faculty search and tenure decision.³⁸

This attentiveness to the possibility of racial or gender discrimination has no analog when it comes to discrimination on the basis of political views. Are the political views of candidates for faculty appointment really invisible to Bowdoin search committee members? It seems unlikely. Inferences can be drawn from a lot of sources: the specialized topics that candidates have pursued in their research, their non-scholarly publications, their involvement in identity-group caucuses that are part of many academic associations, and their explicit statements favoring or disfavoring political candidates.

Solving the problem does not call for affirmative action for conservatives. It calls for stopping the silent discrimination against conservatives. Having said this, we acknowledge that finding conservatives is not easy, not because conservatives aren't interested "in accumulating knowledge," as Prof. Hetherington charged,³⁹ but because earlier in their lives conservatives are discouraged from becoming academics. Still, many qualified conservatives populate the think tanks and the broader NGO world, and a solid supply of classical liberals inhabits academia as well. Bowdoin can't find conservatives in part because it doesn't teach what conservatives tend to want to teach. If, for example, Bowdoin decided to offer a survey course in American political, military, and diplomatic history, it would likely find a qualified faculty member. Let the obvious be our final word on this topic: Bowdoin will find conservatives only if it truly wants to find them.

III. Diversity

President Mills's 2010 convocation speech was ambiguous in certain respects. He welcomed diversity of opinion in the abstract but dismissed criticisms of Bowdoin's approach to racial diversity. This was one instance of how the diversity doctrine at Bowdoin stifles debate about diversity itself. "Diversity" is a disguised form of racism. However well-intentioned diversity's advocates may be, they subscribe to the notion that, contrary to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s formulation, it is better to judge some people by the color of their skin than by the content of their character.⁴⁰ Diversity is, in the liberal theorist Jim Sleeper's phrase,

³⁸Ibid., 2.

³⁹Hetherington, "Conservatives in Short Supply."

⁴⁰"I have a dream this afternoon that my four little children... will not come up in the same young days that I came up within, but they will be judged on the basis of the content of their character, not the color of their skin." Martin Luther King Jr., "Speech at the Great March on Detroit," Detroit, Michigan, June 1963, text available at http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_speech_at_the_great_march_on_detroit/.

“liberal racism.”⁴¹ It splits the nation into divisions perpetuated on the grounds of permanent grievance and difference that can be handed on from generation to generation, exacting permanent atonement even from those who had no historical connection to the original grievances.⁴²

Today, diversity ripples through every level of the college campus. For the most part the effects are unseen, ignored, or denied. Diversity creates courses that would not otherwise be taught, employs faculty who would not otherwise be hired, and leads to dissembling that would not otherwise be required. It foments ideology, politicization, and rules for student life. It influences faculty research interests and weakens academic standards. And it admits students who would not otherwise be accepted to college. Be this as it may, we are more concerned with how diversity influences what Bowdoin teaches than whom it teaches.

Diversity is a doctrine that assumes that communities of virtually all sorts benefit from having representatives from various demographic groups. This assumption justifies an admissions office in giving extra weight to the applicant who belongs to one of these preferred groups. The approach is built on stereotyping, as it assumes that people who belong to a particular identity group share particular ideas and that the members of the group are the best and most appropriate spokesmen for those ideas.

The emphasis on group status strikes a blow against *individual* rights, a foundational idea of the modern West. If Bowdoin students had more exposure to the West, perhaps they might be more likely to notice the conflict between the West and diversity.

(1) Faculty Recruitment

Bowdoin’s emphasis on diversity has tangled consequences. Several of these are visible in faculty recruitment. According to the 1992 “Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity,” which the faculty endorsed:

If we are really interested in attracting a more diverse faculty, the place to start is the job description. Although it would be unfortunate and untrue to think that faculty candidates from diverse minority groups only teach and research “minority” issues, a significant number do.⁴³

Many of the courses that result from this kind of faculty recruitment are highly politicized, and promote and celebrate the groups they study. These programs encourage students to see America and the world not as a collection of individuals but as a cluster of groups. Because these studies programs are seen as promoting a group perspective, they are used to

⁴¹Jim Sleeper, *Liberal Racism: How Fixating on Race Subverts the American Dream*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

⁴²See Peter Wood, *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003) and Russell K. Nieli, *Wounds That Will Not Heal: Affirmative Action and Our Continuing Racial Divide* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012).

⁴³“Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity,” Bowdoin College, November 9, 1992, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, folder 88, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

recruit minority, female, and gay faculty members, and act as lodestones for students who identify with these programs demographically.

To glimpse a specific example of how these studies programs operate in this manner, consider the case of Kristen Ghodsee, John S. Osterweis Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at Bowdoin. On her faculty page on the Bowdoin website, Prof. Ghodsee gives as her current research interests "the ethnographic study of post-communist nostalgia in Eastern Europe and the contributions of state socialist women's organizations to the international women's movement between 1968 and 1990."⁴⁴ She explained in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* how Bowdoin wooed her with tenacity:

The department offered me a competitive salary and a teaching load of two courses a semester, comparable to what I would expect at a major research university, as well as a generous pot of start-up money and the promise of a one-year sabbatical after my third year on the tenure track.⁴⁵

She had expected Bowdoin to be "merely" a "teaching institution" and that her research aspirations would be "prematurely smothered under an avalanche of needy undergraduates." She braced for "academic death" but instead found the opposite.

Clearly Ghodsee is not much interested in teaching "needy undergraduates"—and Bowdoin apparently made a conscious decision to sacrifice teaching for research, a decision in keeping with a long-term trend. Of course, many Bowdoin faculty are devoted teachers and would be appalled by Ghodsee's disdainful comments, but many others would not.

The influence of studies faculty like Ghodsee does not stop at the classroom door. For example, in April 2005 Ghodsee recommended to the faculty that the wording of a question on the student course evaluations be changed because "women faculty were scoring consistently lower on #2 than on #5." Ghodsee explained that "We thought this might be because 'conduct' referred to a more authoritarian lecture style. So, given student gender biases, we suggested a broader, more inclusive language."⁴⁶ Here, Ghodsee's assumption of the gender biases of her students crept further into the Bowdoin culture.

Diversity also affects the nature and quality of the faculty. The 2000–2001 *Faculty Handbook* stated:

In order to improve the diversity of the faculty, and to redress *the under-representation of women and minorities* in the faculty, Bowdoin will consider among qualifications for appointment, a candidate's gender and ethnicity (*specifically, African American, Asian*

⁴⁴"Kristen Ghodsee" faculty page, Bowdoin College, Gender and Women's Studies, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/faculty/k/ghodsee/>.

⁴⁵Kristen Ghodsee, "A Research Career at a Liberal Arts College," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 25, 2008, <http://chronicle.com/article/A-Research-Career-at-a/45760/>.

⁴⁶Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, April 4, 2005, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

American, Latino American, Native American).⁴⁷ (emphases added)

Note that Bowdoin does not claim that diversity is a “tiebreaker,” but rather that diversity, like scholarship, is a “qualification.” Not surprisingly, we do not learn how much weight diversity should be given, but in light of the truly Herculean steps Bowdoin takes to ensure faculty diversity, the weight is no doubt substantial. One such step includes the requirement to have members of the diversity committee (those most committed to diversity and generally the least knowledgeable about the subject matter under discussion) sit in on meetings addressing issues of hiring and tenure.

Though the drive to turn Bowdoin faculty toward research specialization instead of general education began long before the college embraced the studies programs and its commitment to diversity, there has turned out to be a strong affinity between research specialization and diversity. Prof. Ghodsee’s focus on “post-communist nostalgia in Eastern Europe”—nostalgia for the communist regime in Bulgaria in particular—is a case in point. Bowdoin has no general education focus on Eastern Europe or scholarly strength on related topics. Were Bowdoin more attentive to the coherence of its curriculum it probably would have chosen an East European scholar with a much broader reach. Ghodsee’s specialization makes sense only if the program’s primary concern is ideological uniformity. In this sense, the studies programs are a congenial place for specialists who have no natural connection to the larger curriculum.

(2) Dissembling

Diversity also leads to dissembling. Bowdoin feels it necessary to deny that it is giving significant preference to blacks (and others). For example, in its 2006 *Self-Study*, Bowdoin declared that

By all objective measures, the academic quality of Bowdoin students has improved, even as the College has become more diverse, with increasing numbers of students from less-advantaged backgrounds—socio-economically and educationally.⁴⁸

That is strictly true but misleading. It would be more accurate to say that academic quality has improved, but not as much as it would have without the pursuit of diversity.

Dissembling begets more dissembling. When Bowdoin made SAT scores optional in 1969, President Roger Howell Jr. (1969–1978) declared that such standardized test scores inflexibly disallowed the recruitment of students who were not academically well-prepared.⁴⁹ Today, the *stated* reason, however, is that test scores are not predictive of academic success. But

⁴⁷*Faculty Handbook 2000–2001*, Bowdoin College, 10, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/forms-policies/policies/pdf/f00handbook.pdf>.

⁴⁸*The Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2006), 61.

⁴⁹Roger Howell Jr., “A New Humanism,” inaugural address, Bowdoin College, October 3, 1969, catalog no. 1.2.10.1, box 10, folder 31, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

if Bowdoin believes this, it contradicts that belief when it purchases the names and addresses of high-scoring students in order to recruit them to the college.

In January 19, 2011, *Bloomberg News* reported that Bowdoin had been purchasing SAT scores in order to identify students who will be successful at Bowdoin. When Scott Meiklejohn, Bowdoin's dean of admissions, was pressed to explain the inconsistency, he said that "Buying names of students based on their test scores doesn't run contrary to Bowdoin's test-optional policy."⁵⁰ Meiklejohn added:

If there were a convenient way to search for and reach out to 11th graders based on who is going to submit a wonderful essay, or who exhibits exceptional curiosity and motivation in the classroom, or who earns outstanding teacher recommendations, or who has shown a serious commitment to interesting activities outside the classroom...I would use it.⁵¹

Obviously, the college believes that SAT scores have predictive value. Why else would Bowdoin purchase them?

IV. Character

(1) Knowingness

All colleges shape the character of students, though "character" now has an old-fashioned ring. In the 1960s, American higher education collectively decided that it would withdraw from its old role of *in loco parentis*. Instead of acting in the place of parents as a steward of the good behavior and moral character of students, colleges and universities would henceforth treat students as adults capable of managing their own lives. Bowdoin very much participated in this shift, but the de-emphasis on explicit efforts to shape the character of students did not change the practical reality that a college *does* shape their character: by the rules it sets, the habits it cultivates, the incentives it provides, the punishments it metes out, and above all by the values it fosters. Bowdoin encourages a particular vision of good character.

"Knowingness"—the antithesis of humility—is one aspect of character. It is the enemy of education. It is a formula for intellectual complacency.

On May 16, 2011, when Tom Klingenstein and Peter Wood came to Bowdoin in response to an invitation to speak, a student challenged them to "Tell me one subject matter not covered in the Bowdoin curriculum." He was one of several students irritated by the suggestion that Bowdoin College had left some important things out of his education. Another student explained that he and his fellow students had no need for a survey course in American history because they

⁵⁰Janet Lorin, "Bowdoin Says No Need for SAT While Buying College Board Scores," *Bloomberg News*, July 19, 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-07-19/bowdoin-says-no-need-for-sat-while-buying-college-board-scores.html>.

⁵¹Ibid.

had already covered that material in their high school AP courses. He challenged Wood and Klingenstein to ask him any—yes, any—question on American history. He promised to “ace” it.

This student ran up to Klingenstein after the meeting and pressed his views at some length. He had the raw ingredients of a good student: passion, brains, and a thirst for knowledge. What he lacked was the humility needed to comprehend the limits of his knowledge. This student might have acquired that humility had he taken a college-level survey course on American political (or military, diplomatic, or intellectual) history. Such a course would have drawn attention to large gaps in his understanding. But unfortunately for him, Bowdoin does not offer such courses.

Why does Bowdoin put him in this situation? It is a direct consequence of the educational decision the college made several decades ago when it embraced the idea that students were best able to judge for themselves what they should learn. This conception of students as possessors—at age eighteen—of all the wisdom they need to make good decisions about what they should study is integral to the “global citizenship” doctrine. Bowdoin effectively communicates this message, “Our students are very knowledgeable, particularly about the West, and we need not concern ourselves with baseline information they acquired in high school.” Only, of course, very few college students have. Bowdoin has confused intellectual aptitude with developed skill and actual knowledge.

Bowdoin today has virtually no encompassing academic requirements. Students select all their own courses and, within a few loose parameters, build their own curricula. Departments can and do set requirements for majors, but if a student finds these irksome, he can devise his own major. Core requirements *could* provide some of the unity that Bowdoin so desperately desires. Requirements would also foster a richer intellectual life outside the classroom, leading to the development of better critical thinking skills. The fallacies on which giving students control over their education rested were neatly summed up by a Bowdoin English professor more than thirty years ago:

The plea for giving individual students fundamental initiative for their educational program is built on two subtle fallacies. One is the sentimental notion that students have viable knowledge of how they should be educated before they are educated, and that part of their education is acting on this knowledge before it is acquired. This is sheer bootstrapping. The second fallacy is even more illogical. It arises from a totally false analogy—the notion, conscious or unconscious, that students are consumers and curriculum is the merchandise.⁵²

⁵²L.S. Hall, “Notes on Curriculum Problems,” Committee on Curriculum and Educational Policy, Bowdoin College, 1981, catalog no. 1.7.4, vol. 4, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

(2) Sexual License

The main qualities of character that Bowdoin emphasizes are matters of will: students are encouraged to do what they wish. Not so surprisingly, what they wish is not necessarily healthy. Just as they cannot educate themselves, they cannot entirely regulate themselves.

Bowdoin does very little to cultivate in students the habits of self-restraint and personal discipline. Bowdoin students today convince each other that they work hard, yet they spend only about 17.4 hours per week on average outside class studying—a fraction of the time Bowdoin students once devoted to their academic work.⁵³ The college has a relaxed approach to underage drinking as long as students stick to beer and stay away from hard alcohol. And Bowdoin, in our view, positively promotes sexual promiscuity.

In 2009, for example, Bowdoin added a play written by students about the sexual practices of undergraduates at Bowdoin to “New Student Orientation.” *Speak About It* is required viewing for all new students. The play presents couples—gay and straight—thinking aloud about their carnal relations with one another. It includes a disclaimer that students should feel free to decline sex, but focuses entirely and with enthusiasm on those who don’t decline. In one scene, an undergraduate male and an undergraduate female voice their thoughts aloud while preparing to have sex:

Male: We’ve been making out for a while now.

Female: I wish he would just ask me to take off my shirt.

Male: Really? That won’t kill the mood?

Female: What mood? We’re in a bunk bed. Just ask.

Eventually, the male sneaks away as the female orgasms loudly alone.⁵⁴

The 2011 performance of *Speak About It* concluded:

Whatever you decide you want your relationship with sex to be about there are opportunities out there. Whether you want to have sex or you don’t, you’re looking for love or a one-night stand, you’re gay or straight or somewhere in between, it’s all possible. And whatever happens remember to be safe, get consent, and watch out for your friends.⁵⁵

The crude content leads to an emphatic message that the only requirement for “any healthy sexual encounter” is “consent.” To help things along, Bowdoin makes sure that a

⁵³Jonathan Goldstein, “The Tradeoff Between Extra-Curricular Activities and the Academic Mission of Small Liberal Arts Colleges: Why Some Schools Are Poor Educational Investments,” unpublished paper, August 19, 2008; rev. February 11, 2009, 2-3.

⁵⁴This content is transcribed from the *Speak About It* video on Speak About It, <http://speakaboutitonline.com/>.

⁵⁵“Speak About It 2011,” Bowdoin College, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/sexual-assault/video/speakaboutit.mp4>.

generous supply of condoms is conspicuously available on every floor of every dorm and in other public places as well. This is not just encouraging *safe* sex, it is encouraging sex.

Sexual behavior among late adolescents is nothing new, but it is fairly new for colleges to aggressively market sexual promiscuity to their students. For official Bowdoin, the *only* consideration that bears on decisions about sexual intimacy is whether the partners have given “consent.” By framing the matter in this way, Bowdoin drives other concerns underground: that sexual license might be damaging psychologically or morally, or that there is something socially amiss with the “hookup culture.”⁵⁶ And in these ways, Bowdoin marginalizes students who might for religious reasons or simply on the basis of personal insight reject the college’s undergraduate culture of sexual license. No effort is made to create space for such students.

“Hooking up” has become the campus norm, with repeated surveys indicating that about three-quarters of Bowdoin students participate in sexual relations with partners with whom they do not have emotional and relational commitments. Here are the findings of one such study:

Twenty-seven percent said they “hook up” only while sober, 21 percent are normally “a little tipsy,” 28 percent are “heavily buzzed,” 18 percent are “pretty trashed,” and 6 percent are “totally wasted.”⁵⁷

The terms of these results make the report sound more like satire than social science, but the report presented itself—and the *Bowdoin Orient* accepted it—as serious inquiry. Perhaps the key finding is that 73 percent of the respondents who said they hook up do so having used some measure of alcohol. Is there not something amiss when sex must be fueled by alcohol? Could it be that even students sense that there is something wrong with sex without emotion?

We report these findings in more detail in our section on student culture in the full report. Highlighting them in this preface invites the all-but-certain response that we advocate a return to Victorian hypocrisy. We don’t. But sexual behavior is a major element in the formation of character, and a breakdown of restraint in this arena spills over elsewhere. And the psychological consequences of poor decisions in this realm can last well into adulthood. Bowdoin sees its role in promoting sexual freedom and experimentation among students as a positive contribution to their education, because it expands students’ sense of “tolerance” as well as their moral autonomy.

⁵⁶See, Joan R. Kahn and Kathryn A. London, “Premarital Sex and the Risk of Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53, no. 4 (November 1991): 845–55; Tim B. Heaton, “Factors Contributing to the Increasing Marital Stability in the United States,” *Journal of Family Issues* 23, no. 3 (April 2002): 392–409; Jay Teachman, “Premarital Sex, Premarital Cohabitation, and the Risk of Subsequent Marital Dissolution among Women,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 65, no. 2 (May 2003): 444–55; and Anthony Paik, “Adolescent Sexuality and the Risk of Marital Dissolution,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 73, no. 2 (April 2011): 472–85.

⁵⁷Alison L. McConnell, “Class Releases ‘Hookup’ and Drug Use Stats,” *Bowdoin Orient*. April 23, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/view/104>.

V. Sustainability

Character formation is woven into many other aspects of academic and social life at Bowdoin. It is connected, for example, with the college's emphasis on "sustainability," which deals to an extent with the current generation's obligation to future generations. Sustainability sounds to the uninitiated like just another word for environmentalism, but that is wide of the mark. Sustainability is *not* environmentalism, though it uses environmental themes as its springboard.

In spring 2013, about five hundred Bowdoin students signed a petition sponsored by Bowdoin Climate Action, a student group that is calling on the Bowdoin administration to divest its holdings in fossil fuel energy companies. Bowdoin has 1.4 percent of its endowment invested in such companies. One of a cluster of student groups on campus that pursue sustainability activism, Bowdoin Climate Action is a "subset" of the Green Bowdoin Alliance, the "go-to student environmental group" that works on "political activism, changing student behavior, and dining-related issues."⁵⁸ There is also Green Global Initiatives, which "recognizes that Climate Change is one of the most pressing issues that our generation faces." It brings speakers to campus to "network with students on 'green' jobs."⁵⁹ Another group, the Evergreens, sponsors "forums on environmental issues," assists "in campus greening efforts," and organizes Earth Week events.⁶⁰ Bowdoin's official Sustainability Office also has a student "Eco-Rep" assigned to each residence hall.

Sustainability is unmistakably a major ideological presence at Bowdoin. But it is something that an outsider might nonetheless easily misinterpret because it wears its environmentalist colors so prominently.

"Sustainability" as understood by its promoters actually has three parts: environmentalism, anticapitalism, and progressive notions of "social justice," e.g., anticolonialism, multiculturalism, and feminism. It is indeed a save-the-world doctrine, but the salvation is to be achieved by dismantling the fossil fuel world economy, limiting private property rights, dramatically increasing government regulation and discretionary authority, redefining what counts as "public resources," redistributing wealth on a global basis, emphasizing racial differences, and empowering women. Sustainability, like most social movements, presents different faces to different audiences. To some it may mean recycling plastics and papers and buying a Prius for family transportation. But on campus the sustainability movement has harder edges.

At the moment, a nationwide movement led by activist Bill McKibben and his organization 350.org is trying to persuade colleges and universities to divest their holdings in

⁵⁸"Student Involvement," Bowdoin College, Sustainability, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/student-involvement/index.shtml>.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰"The Evergreens," Bowdoin College, Environmental Studies, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/environmental-studies/resources/the-evergreens.shtm>.

fossil fuel-based energy companies. McKibben is a long-term advocate of radical reduction of the world's population who has only recently taken up the cause of fighting global warming by reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Joining a panel that included the executive director of Maine's chapter of the Sierra Club and as a guest of Bowdoin Climate Action, McKibben joined a panel at Bowdoin via Skype to promote his divestment campaign on February 23, 2013. As of that date, 256 colleges and universities had formed student groups that called for such divestment.

The divestment campaign came to Bowdoin in late 2012, in the wake of a well-publicized referendum in November in which 72 percent of participating Harvard undergraduates voted to call on their administration to divest. Bowdoin students launched a similar signature campaign and President Mills replied in December that while he would "never say never," he was not ready to divest Bowdoin's holdings at that point.⁶¹ The Bowdoin student body understood Mills as saying that Bowdoin would not ever divest, and indeed Mills has on various occasions reminded the faculty of Bowdoin's dependence on Wall Street. Of course, getting a college to divest its holdings in oil, coal, and natural gas companies would do nothing to halt or impede fossil fuel production. The campaign has far more to do with building ideological antipathy for fossil fuels among college students than it does with changing national environmental policy.⁶²

The divestment campaign is one example of how "sustainability" reaches beyond environmentalism, but there are many more. In 2009, Bowdoin's "Climate Days" program featured a talk by Majora Carter, founder of Sustainable South Bronx.⁶³ Carter is a political activist who rose to prominence by leading opposition to the building of waste treatment plants in minority neighborhoods. She now advocates replacing a "pollution-based economy" with locally-raised foods and "green economic development," and she wants people to be trained in "urban forestry management, horticultural infrastructure, building green roofs, [and] restoring some of our wetlands." Carter likens her movement to the civil rights movement.

Colleges should be places where ideas like these can be debated, but because the sustainability movement has been officially endorsed by President Mills and Bowdoin has put forward definite goals and timetables for meeting them, there really is no debate at Bowdoin over the *principles* of the sustainability movement. What *is* open for debate are the details of implementation.

⁶¹Marisa McGarry, "Mills Says College Will Not Divest from Fossil Fuels," *Bowdoin Orient*, December 7, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7814>.

⁶²See Stanley Kurtz, "Fossil-Fuel Divestment," *National Review Online*, March 4, 2013, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/341991/fossil-fuel-divestment-stanley-kurtz>.

⁶³"Environmental Justice Leader Majora Carter Wraps Up Climate Days," Bowdoin College, Sustainability, September 28, 2009, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/activity/2009/majora-carter.shtml>. Full audio of Majora Carter's talk, "Green Jobs and the Green Economy," is available at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/common-hour-audio/id429496124>.

VI. Historical Obligations

Bowdoin does very little to foster a sense of obligation or stewardship to the achievements of past generations. Bowdoin sometimes senses the importance of history, but is unwilling to show history any real respect. Mills again makes the point. The early presidents of Bowdoin were committed to what they called “the Common Good.” By this, they meant primarily the virtue and piety students were supposed to model to the larger society. Mills has kept the term, but replaced virtue and piety with ideas of social justice, transnationalism, and sustainability. In doing so he pays homage to the importance of history, but he abuses its obligations. Only once that we know of—a 2008 lecture by Eva Brann, a tutor in the great books program at St. John’s College, Annapolis—has anyone at Bowdoin raised a public challenge to the way Mills has appropriated the idea of the common good.⁶⁴ Brann, who argued that the common good lies in an open-minded seeking of human excellence rather than in pursuing utilitarian “public goods,” provoked a lively discussion but does not appear to have persuaded Mills or Bowdoin as a whole to amend its use of the term.⁶⁵

Mills’s understanding of the common good puts emphasis on empathy and, perhaps above all, tolerance. These are admirable qualities but they are not the highest virtues. On the other hand, the classical virtues as taught by Bowdoin’s founding president fostered the courage of great-souled men who not only fed the poor, but were willing to sacrifice their lives for a great cause. No one lays down his life for sustainability.

VII. What Next?

In his 2010 convocation speech, Mills said he didn’t know how to address the lack of intellectual diversity on campus. He threw up his hands when, at the very least, he might have established a commission to study the problem. Would Bowdoin’s nearly all-liberal faculty admit that there is a problem to be studied? We’ve quoted some faculty members who emphatically say there is no problem. On the other hand, there are many Bowdoin faculty members committed to the liberal arts. They might endorse a commission. Bowdoin usually takes its commissions seriously. At different times in Bowdoin’s recent history, it established commissions to recommend ways the college could be more hospitable to minorities, women, and gays and lesbians. By and large, the recommendations were adopted. Perhaps a commission to study liberal bias might produce similarly fruitful results.

Americans take their ideals seriously. Bowdoin’s liberal arts ideals call for openness and tolerance—tolerance even of conservative views. Hold up these ideals to actual practice, and one

⁶⁴“Eva Brann Lecture,” Bowdoin College, Calendar, April 18, 2008, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/calendar/event.jsp?bid=329686&rid=39727#.UUuMWhftLc>.

⁶⁵Ross Jacobs, “Eva Brann Pushes Students Rethink [sic] the Common Good in Education,” *Bowdoin Orient*, May 2, 2008, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3556>.

may be surprised to find a college willing to mobilize. Bowdoin only stands to gain if it rededicates itself to its own principles of honesty, openness, and decency—the principles of liberal education that are among our best traditions and are part of the foundation of Western civilization.

VIII. The Full Report

This preface has been written to circulate independently of the full report, but it is by no means intended to stand alone. It is rather an interpretation of the report, which demands attention in its own right. We invite the reader to turn—open-mindedly—to *What Does Bowdoin Teach?*

This preface presents what I take to be some of the larger lessons of the report, but the report itself is a gold mine of material about Bowdoin and is certainly open to other readings. The report consists of five main sections: (1) Academic Instruction, (2) Key Concepts, (3) Student Culture, (4) Student Learning, and (5) Faculty. While as an author I entertain the hope that readers will want to proceed through the report page by page absorbing the slow accumulation of detail, I recognize that some sections will attract more interest than others. The three chapters on academic instruction focus on the nuts and bolts of the curriculum. They deal largely with the consequences of Bowdoin’s fateful decision in 1969 to abolish its general education requirements. They also present an account of the rise of the studies programs.

The next chapter deals with Bowdoin’s key concepts. By this we mean the ideas, such as “the Common Good,” and “diversity,” that dominate Bowdoin’s conversations about itself. This chapter opens windows on the life of the college without demanding any technical knowledge of how higher education works.

The chapter on student culture begins with a rather lengthy examination of how Bowdoin frames issues of sex and sexuality among students. It also includes sections on drinking and partying, sports, hazing, and religion. Depending on the reader’s familiarity with the contemporary college campus, this material will come across as standard fare or alarming. We don’t mean to suggest that Bowdoin is outside the mainstream in these matters—but the mainstream definitely isn’t what it used to be.

Student learning is a brief chapter that deals with Bowdoin’s idea of “selectivity,” popular majors, critical thinking, and intellectual life on campus.

The chapter on faculty collects several themes, perhaps most importantly the college’s emphasis on faculty members as academic research specialists and the difficulties Bowdoin has had in bringing to life the role of faculty members as advisors to students.

The report ends with a reflection on “What Bowdoin Doesn’t Teach” in which we offer an interpretive synthesis of the entire report.

Even at that we are not quite through with our tax on the reader's time. The report as originally written was much longer. We decided that some sections that we cut from the draft deserved a home of their own. They can be found on the NAS website as "Bowdoin Preliminaries." I would draw particular attention to our history of the college from its founding in 1794, and to the stand-alone essays on "The Common Good's Uncommon Usage" and "'Diversity' Comes to Bowdoin."

This report presents a new way to look at how liberal arts education proceeds in its primary tasks of shaping the minds and character of students. There is much more to be said, not just of Bowdoin, but of liberal arts colleges elsewhere. We look forward to what we know will be a thoughtful critique and development of the ideas presented here.

Introduction

This is a study of one small and highly-regarded liberal arts college. But it is also a study of how contemporary liberal arts education in the United States functions at many colleges. Bowdoin is an example. Nearly everything we have to say about Bowdoin has its counterpart at other selective liberal arts colleges, and much of what we say applies to a still broader range of colleges and universities.

The method of looking at the particular to find the general—looking at one college to exemplify what happens at many colleges—may be unfamiliar to some readers. It has two important advantages over other approaches. It allows us to go deep. And it allows us to capture how seemingly disparate aspects of the college come together as a whole. But it has one significant disadvantage: we cannot *prove* that what we found at Bowdoin is a pattern that is repeated with minor variations elsewhere. On the basis of broad experience, we think that Bowdoin represents the larger reality, but we leave it to the reader to determine whether the picture that emerges in the following pages fits closely with other colleges or comes across as an eccentric departure from prevailing curricula and campus cultures.

While we attempt to understand Bowdoin as a whole, our report does not give equal emphasis to every part of Bowdoin. Our guiding interest is “What does Bowdoin teach?”—or, more generally, what is the substance of a contemporary liberal arts education? This means we have much to say about the curriculum, its guiding principles, and the values transmitted in student culture, and far less to say about the careers of its faculty members, college finances, and personnel policies. On some possibly relevant subjects, we are silent. We do not, for example, discuss how the art and architecture of the college bear on what it teaches, though undoubtedly they teach something. Other topics are left unaddressed simply because we had no access to the necessary data. We know, for example, that Bowdoin uses racial preferences in student admissions and faculty hiring, and while we can make some solid inferences from the available material, the college does not disclose very much on this topic.

Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, is one of the nation’s leading liberal arts colleges. Founded in 1794 and opened in 1802, Bowdoin has a rich history that matches much of the history of the republic. In its earliest days, when Maine was still part of Massachusetts, it was a college that served the rural populace of the region, including some of New England’s growing class of prosperous merchants and “local elites,” but more than half the students were impoverished and relied on a combination of charity, seasonable jobs, and sharing expenses through “boarding clubs.”⁶⁶ Nathaniel Hawthorne attended Bowdoin (1821–1825), as did Henry

⁶⁶David F. Allmendinger Jr., *Paupers and Scholars: The Transformation of Student Life in Nineteenth-Century New England* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1975), 12. Charles Dorn, “From ‘Liberal Professions’ to ‘Lucrative Professions’: Bowdoin College, Stanford University, and the Civic Functions of Higher Education,” *Teachers College Record* 113, no. 7 (July 2011): 1571, 1574–75.

Wadsworth Longfellow (1822–1825) and Franklin Pierce (1820–1824). In 1871, Joshua Chamberlain became Bowdoin’s sixth president. A hero of Gettysburg and governor of Maine from 1866 to 1869, Chamberlain gave the college national ambitions.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Bowdoin was notable for maintaining a strict model of classical education. Beginning in 1963, Bowdoin turned away from this approach and embarked on innovations in the curriculum, student residence, and eventually every aspect of college life. Bowdoin today is the product of this half-century of innovation, which continues.

Our study of Bowdoin focuses on the present. In the strictest sense, the present for us means the 2011–2012 academic year, but we have freely added more recent data. We also speak of Bowdoin’s present in two other senses: the period that began with the inauguration of President Barry Mills in 2001 and Bowdoin’s modern epoch, which we trace to the inauguration of President Roger Howell Jr. in 1969. Our report, however, is historically minded and includes many references to Bowdoin before 1969.

This introduction provides a synopsis of those parts of Bowdoin’s history that bear on our study and a précis of key data on such matters as enrollment, faculty-to-student ratio, and college finances. From there we turn to the body of the report, beginning with three chapters on academic instruction at the college. These are followed by a study of Bowdoin’s “key concepts,” that is, its dominant ideas. We then turn to student culture, student learning, and conclude with some analysis of the faculty.

Bowdoin’s History

The history of Bowdoin is recounted in numerous sources, perhaps most accessibly and succinctly in the *Bowdoin College Catalogue*’s “Overview—Historical Sketch.”⁶⁷ We have compiled our own history and posted it on the National Association of Scholars webpage dedicated to the Bowdoin Project.⁶⁸ Bowdoin is mindful of its past—as something to be proud of and as something to live down. Almost all of Bowdoin’s current values and ideals are best understood in light of its history.

For the sake of easy reference, we offer a short guide to the history of Bowdoin through its fourteen presidents.

⁶⁷*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2009–2010*, 5–8.

⁶⁸“The Bowdoin Project,” National Association of Scholars, http://www.nas.org/projects/the_bowdoin_project/.

The Fourteen Presidents of Bowdoin College

Joseph McKeen (1802–1807): Congregationalist minister, Federalist; inaugural address introduced the idea of “the common good.”

Jesse Appleton (1807–1819): Congregationalist minister, Federalist; focused on student morals and discipline, died in office.

William Allen (1820–1839): Congregationalist minister, Democratic-Republican; put Bowdoin under control of Maine legislature, which eventually fired him. Successfully sued to regain presidency; Circuit Court decision by Justice Joseph Story is landmark in American jurisprudence. Founded Medical School of Maine as part of Bowdoin.

Leonard Woods Jr. (1839–1866): Congregationalist minister; issued Declaration of Denominational Status emphasizing Bowdoin’s ties to Congregationalist Church, completed construction of Bowdoin Chapel. Discouraged Bowdoin students from serving in military during Civil War.

Samuel Harris (1867–1871): Congregationalist minister; first Bowdoin alumnus to be Bowdoin president; resigned after four years to join Yale theology faculty. Regarded intellectual and physical training as “subordinate to moral and spiritual ends,” but made afternoon church services optional for students who attended Sunday evening prayers. Attempted to end student hazing.

Joshua L. Chamberlain (1871–1883): Congregationalist but first non-clergyman president of Bowdoin, Republican; Civil War hero at Gettysburg; retired from Army at the rank of Brigadier General; governor of Maine 1867–1871. On inauguration declared Bowdoin “behind the times,” “shut up in the past,” and called for new education focused on “training” for the kind of work the post-Civil War nation needed. Enlarged curriculum; increased study of German and French; introduced engineering courses; founded a department of science; advocated admission of women to some classes; introduced military training and elective system. Attempted to redefine Bowdoin, a New England regional college, as a national institution.

William DeWitt Hyde (1885–1917): Congregationalist minister, Democrat; carried forward Chamberlain’s new vision of Bowdoin. Chairman of mental and moral philosophy while serving as president. Regarded as Bowdoin’s greatest teacher, in wide demand as a public speaker. Removed Greek entrance requirement; reorganized and expanded library; expanded faculty in the sciences and social sciences; introduced the undergraduate major and expanded the elective system; abolished Sunday morning worship requirement. Died in office.

Kenneth C. M. Sills (1918–1952): Episcopalian (first non-Congregationalist president of Bowdoin), Democrat; Bowdoin alumnus, student and follower of Hyde. Abolished bachelor of science degree; closed Medical School of Maine in 1921; expanded number of majors and elective courses, but maintained requirement in Latin, Greek, and mathematics; successfully took

control of Bowdoin athletics from alumni. Cooperated with U.S. armed forces during both World Wars by offering war-related courses, but reluctantly accepted campus ROTC in 1950.

James S. Coles (1952–1967): Episcopalian, Ph.D. in chemistry, Columbia University; abolished Latin, Greek, and mathematics requirement. Built Senior Center (common residence for all Bowdoin seniors) and established Senior Seminar Program, a capstone multidisciplinary curriculum emphasizing student independence and research; required students to do senior projects outside their majors. Presided over *The Conservative Tradition in Education at Bowdoin College*, 1955 declaration that Bowdoin would safeguard its traditional academic program against the national trend to modernize college curricula, but also oversaw the rapid modernization of the campus, curriculum, and faculty hiring summarized in *A Decade of Progress 1952–1962*. Succeeded by Athern Daggett, acting president (1967–1969).

Roger Howell Jr. (1969–1978): Episcopalian; first president not to mention religion in inaugural address, “A New Humanism”; youngest Bowdoin president (inaugurated at thirty-three). Bowdoin alumnus, Rhodes Scholar, former Bowdoin faculty member and dean of the college. In 1969, established Afro-American Studies in 1969, recruited students in the arts and “students of color,” and made SAT and other standardized tests optional. Joined student strike against Vietnam War in 1970; made Bowdoin fully coeducational in 1971; increased student enrollment from 950 in 1969 to 1,400 in the 1970s. Presided over elimination of nearly all academic requirements except for completion of a major and the equivalent of thirty-two “semester hours” (courses); established interdisciplinary environmental studies in 1970.

Willard F. Enteman (1978–1980): Unitarian; tried to end Bowdoin’s investments in companies doing business in South Africa in protest of apartheid; demanded membership of women in Bowdoin fraternities. Resigned during dispute with the board of trustees, allegedly in resistance to a board member’s attempt to use Bowdoin in tax evasion scheme. Presidency omitted from “Historical Sketch” in *Bowdoin College Catalogue*, though Enteman’s name and dates appear in the list of Bowdoin’s presidents.

LeRoy Greason (1981–1990): Member of First Parish in Brunswick, a historically Congregationalist church; reestablished some academic requirements for graduation, including distribution requirements. Led largely unsuccessful effort to add African Americans to Bowdoin faculty; created a minor in women’s studies; established Asian Studies. By his tenure’s end, Bowdoin was in serious financial trouble.

Robert H. Edwards (1990–2001): Religious affiliation not recorded; began term by laying off some staff and taking other steps to control expenses; launched capital campaign that raised \$135 million; received many resignations from Bowdoin administrators, dismissed others. After improving Bowdoin’s financial situation and replacing much of its administration, embarked on an expansion of Bowdoin’s faculty, physical plant, and programs of studies. Introduced Latin American studies, gay and lesbian studies; turned women’s studies into a major. Established Subcommittee on Diversity and the Task Force on Improving the Status of Women at Bowdoin. Among many new buildings and land acquisitions, constructed laboratories at Bowdoin’s new

Coastal Studies Center on Orr's Island. Replaced residential fraternity system with "House" membership system. Expanded student enrollment from 1,385 to 1,635; increased college endowment from \$175 million to \$500 million. Raised students' comprehensive fees 41.9 percent between 1993–1994 and 2001–2002.

Barry Mills (2001–present): Bowdoin's first Jewish president; established new curricular requirements in 2004; announced initiatives to increase faculty, student, and staff "diversity." Signed U.S. College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment in 2007, obligating Bowdoin to combat global warming and teach "sustainability." Built Studzinski Recital Hall, expanded Walker Art Building. Replaced student loans with grants, beginning 2008. Increased full-time faculty from 151 to 182, student enrollment from 1,635 to 1,773, endowment from \$500 million to \$904.2 million. Raised faculty salaries over 36 percent from 2002 to 2012, making Bowdoin's faculty among nation's best paid (96th percentile for baccalaureate institutions). Raised students' comprehensive fees by 62.8 percent between 2002 and 2012.

Bowdoin at a Glance

- **Degree offered:** Bachelor's degree
- **Number of courses offered, 2010–2011:** 693 [OIR]
- **Median class size, 2010–2011:** 17 [OIR]
- **Enrollment, full-time and part-time:**
 - **Fall 2010:** 1,762 [IPEDS]
 - **Fall 2011:** 1,778 [CDS]
- **Dormitory capacity:** 1,725 [IPEDS]
- **Living alumni, Fall 2011:** 19,799 [OIR]
- **Location:** Brunswick, Maine
- **215 acres in Brunswick; approximately 120 buildings**

Figure 1: Faculty

Fall 2010: 204 full-time, 30 part-time [IPEDS]

Fall 2011: 182 full-time, 40 part-time [CDS]

Note: This discrepancy is due to the different methodologies of IPEDS and CDS and does not reflect any significant change in the number of Bowdoin faculty between academic year (AY) 2010 and AY 2011.⁶⁹

Figure 2: Endowment

2010: \$753,525,000 [IPEDS]

2011: \$904,215,000 [*Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 31, 2012, reporting data released by Bowdoin September 21, 2011, for fiscal year (FY) ending June 30, 2011]

⁶⁹According to Margaret Allen, Bowdoin's assistant director of Institutional Research:

Approximately 82% of Bowdoin's difference is attributed to IPEDS' including sabbatical replacements vs. CDS' excluding them. The remaining difference is accounted for by slight differences in definitions for full-time. IPEDS counts faculty as full-time when they are carrying a full teaching load as of November 1st (the IPEDS snapshot date), regardless of what they do during the spring semester (they may not be teaching but on a semester leave, etc.); CDS considers part-time, not full-time, those faculty who are teaching fewer than 2 semesters during the year (in other words, here teaching full load in the fall but gone in the spring). These types are full-time for IPEDS but part-time for CDS, assuming that all other criteria are fulfilled.

Margaret Allen, email message to Peter Wood, August 15, 2012.

Figure 3: Endowment per Full-Time Enrolled Student

2010: \$430,832 [IPEDS]

2011: \$509,992 [Our calculation: $\$904,215,000 \div 1,773$ full-time students, Fall 2011]
\$514,636 [Bowdoin's calculation reported by OIR]⁷⁰

Figure 4: Comprehensive Fee for Fall 2012: \$56,128⁷¹

Tuition:	\$43,676
Room:	\$5,620
Board:	\$6,390
Student Activities Fee:	\$442

Figure 5: Change in Comprehensive Fee from 2001–2002 to 2012–2013 [CDS]

Comprehensive Fee 2001–2002:	\$34,480
Comprehensive Fee 2012–2013:	\$56,128
Difference:	\$21,648
Percentage increase:	62.8%

Figure 6: Comparison Groups of Colleges

- Bowdoin compares itself to the following group of eighteen other colleges in order to set faculty salaries and possibly other purposes:
Amherst, Bates, Bryn Mawr, Colby, Connecticut, Hamilton, Haverford, Middlebury, Mount Holyoke, Oberlin, Smith, Swarthmore, Trinity, Vassar, Wesleyan, Wellesley, Wheaton, and Williams.⁷²
- Bowdoin's Office of Institutional Research lists "22 Comparable Colleges," which includes three schools not among the eighteen listed above: Carleton, Grinnell, and Pomona.⁷³
- Bowdoin belongs to the New England Small College Athletic Conference. The other members are:

⁷⁰"Finance," Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/finance.shtml>.

⁷¹Barry Mills, "A Letter to Parents," *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, May 17, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2012/05/barry-mills-a-letter-to-parents-2/#more-49938>.

⁷²Fe Vivas, "Trustees Approve College Budget," *Bowdoin Orient*, February 15, 2002, <http://orient.bowdoin.edu/orient/archives/2002-02-15/news06.htm>.

⁷³"Resources: 22 Comparable Colleges," Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/resources.shtml>.

Amherst, Bates, Bowdoin, Colby, Connecticut, Hamilton, Middlebury, Trinity, Tufts, Wesleyan, and Williams.

Figure 7: Varsity Sports

Men's Sports:	Baseball, Basketball, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Nordic Skiing, Sailing, Soccer, Squash, Swimming and Diving, Tennis, Track and Field
Women's Sports:	Basketball, Cross Country, Field Hockey, Golf, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Nordic Skiing, Rugby, Sailing, Soccer, Softball, Squash, Swimming and Diving, Tennis, Track and Field, Volleyball

Figure 8: Core Revenues, Fiscal Year 2010 [IPEDS]

Core Revenues Fiscal Year 2010	Total	Distribution (%)	Per FTE Enrollment
Tuition and fees	50,824,000	31.82	29,059
Government grants and contracts	2,928,000	1.83	1,674
Private gifts, grants, and contracts	29,181,000	18.27	16,684
Investment return	73,865,000	46.24	42,233
Other core revenues	2,936,000	1.84	1,679

Figure 9: Money Raised, 2010-2011

- \$34,353,573

Source: "Money Raised by Colleges, 2010–11," Chronicle of Higher Education, February 15, 2012.

Figure 10: Core Expenses: Fiscal Year 2010 [IPEDS]

Core Expense	Total	Distribution (%)	Per FTE Enrollment
Instruction	41,314,000	41.73	23,621
Research	2,451,000	2.48	1,401
Public service	0	0.00	0
Academic support	15,774,000	15.93	9,019
Institution support	18,511,000	18.70	10,584
Student services	20,961,000	21.17	11,985
Other core expenses	0	0.00	0

Figure 11: Total Faculty and Staff [IPEDS]

Number of staff by primary function/occupational activity Fall 2010	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Instruction	204	30	234
Instruction/Research/Public Service	0	1	1
Research	0	0	0
Public Service and Contracts	0	0	0
Executive/Administrative/Managerial	118	17	135
Other Professional (Support/Service)	152	43	195
Graduate Assistant	0	0	0
Technical and Paraprofessional	16	7	23
Clerical and Secretarial	85	29	114
Skilled Crafts	29	3	32
Service/Maintenance	179	40	219

Figure 12: Faculty by Employment Status [IPEDS]

Number of full-time instruction/research/ public service staff, Fall 2010	Total
With faculty status	204
With tenure	124
On tenure track	39
Not on tenure track	41
Without faculty status	n/a

Figure 13: Race and Ethnicity of Full-Time Faculty Members

• Full-time	198
• White	158
• Black	9
• Hispanic	10
• Asian	13
• American Indian	1
• Race Unknown	0
• Two or More	0
• Nonresident Foreign	7
• Percentage Minority	17

Source: "Diversity in Academe," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 25, 2011.

Figure 14: Gender of Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty [CDS]

	Full-Time	Part-Time
Women	89	20
Men	93	20

Figure 15: Admissions

	Applied	Admitted	Enrolled	
			Full-time	Part-time
Men	2,582	588	260	0
Women	3,436	595	250	0
Total	6,018	1,183	510	0

Source: Admissions Data, Fall 2010 [IPEDS].

Figure 16: Admissions Data, Fall 2011

- Applicants, Class of 2015 6,554
- Admitted 1,056 (16.1%)
- Yield (number admitted who matriculated) 484 (45.8%)
- Applicants for financial aid (Class of 2015) 4,232 (64.6%)
- Matriculants receiving financial aid (Class of 2015) 211 (43.7%)

Source: Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, *Answers to Frequently Asked Questions*.

Figure 17: Enrollment Data [IPEDS]

Undergraduate Enrollment	Part-Time	Full-Time	Total
Degree-/Certificate-Seeking	1	1,750	1,751
First-Time	0	507	507
Transfer-In	0	3	3
Other Continuing	1	1,240	1,241
Non-Degree-/Certificate-Seeking	6	5	11

Figure 18: Enrollment Data by Gender and Ethnicity, Fall 2010 [IPEDS]

Total Student Enrollment	Part-Time	Full-Time	Total
Men	1	869	870
Women	6	886	892
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	2	2
Asian	0	128	128
Black or African American	0	89	89
Hispanic	0	211	211
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	3	3
White	4	1,144	1,148
Two or more races	0	108	108
Race/Ethnicity Unknown	0	9	9
Nonresident Alien	3	61	64

Figure 19: Twelve-Month Enrollment by Gender and Ethnicity, 2010 [IPEDS]

Unduplicated Count	Undergraduate	Total
Men	919	919
Women	964	964
White Non-Hispanic	1,257	1,257
Black Non-Hispanic	118	118
Hispanic	190	190
Asian/Pacific Islander	217	217
American Indian or Alaska Native	10	10
Race/Ethnicity Unknown	28	28
Nonresident alien	63	63

Figure 20: Graduation Rates by Gender and Ethnicity, 2010

Graduation Rates within 150% of Four Years to Program Completion: 2010	
Overall	93
Men	94
Women	91
White, Non-Hispanic	94
Black, Non-Hispanic	85
Hispanic	90
Asian or Pacific Islander	92
American Indian or Alaska Native	88
Race/Ethnicity Unknown	93
Nonresident Alien	93

Note: Data are for full-time, first-time, degree-/certificate-seeking undergraduates.

Figure 21: Student Demographics, Fall 2011

• Male students	901 (50.7%)
• Female students	877 (49.3%)
• “Student of Color”	539 (30.3%)
• International students	72 (4.0%)
• Students from Maine	208 (11.7%)
• Number of U.S. states with students enrolled	47
• Number of foreign countries with students enrolled	35
• Number of students enrolled in off-campus study, Fall 2011	128
• Number of Class of 2015 applicants	6,554

Source: Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, *Answers to Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/faqs.shtml>.

Chapter 1

Academic Instruction: Bowdoin's Courses

This is first of three chapters on academic instruction. We begin with the basic unit of instruction, the academic course. In the second chapter we examine the organization of the curriculum into majors, distribution requirements, and other structures. Our third chapter explores several themes, including “academic preparedness,” that shape the curriculum as a whole.

When we ask “What does Bowdoin teach?” the obvious answer is academic courses. Academic courses are not *all* of what Bowdoin teaches. It teaches values and concepts outside the curriculum as well. But the first step to understanding what Bowdoin teaches is indeed to understand its courses and academic requirements.

In fall 2011, Bowdoin offered 317 distinct academic courses.⁷⁴ In spring 2012, it offered 314 courses. The complete lists are tabulated in appendix I and appendix II.⁷⁵

Individual class sizes during the 2011–2012 academic year ranged from three students (e.g., AFR S218, “African American Experience in Europe”) to sixty-four students (e.g., ARCH103, “Egyptian Archaeology”). Bowdoin officially caps enrollments in every class (it calls these “maximum enrollment caps”). The course with the highest cap is ES101, “Introduction to Environmental Studies,” which is capped at ninety (actual enrollment seventy-eight). Relatively few courses have such high caps. Bowdoin says that the median class size in 2010–2011 was seventeen students.⁷⁶ The distribution around this mean is broad. Many courses are capped at thirty-five students. Freshmen seminars are capped at sixteen students. In fall 2011, twenty-three sections were capped at fifty. In spring 2012, thirty-eight sections were capped at fifty. Bowdoin

⁷⁴The number 317 is derived by taking the total number of sections offered in fall 2011 (420 sections) and removing multiple sections (39) and cross-listings (64), each of which we count only once. We have also subtracted lab sections. The number 317 thus represents the total of distinct curricular units. We have performed the same calculations to derive the total of spring 2012 courses.

⁷⁵Bowdoin lists most of its courses in the *Bowdoin College Catalogue*, but in a given academic year some course listings may not be offered. Other courses not listed in the *Catalogue* may be available (e.g., PHIL252, “Global Justice,” offered spring 2012, was not in the *Catalogue*). Courses actually offered in a given semester are listed by the registrar’s office in its “Schedule of Course Offerings.” The registrar also issues a report, “Class Enrollments,” after the registration period has ended. Our analyses are based on the “Class Enrollments” report, supplemented by the *Bowdoin College Catalogue*.

The course listings present some complications. Many courses are listed multiple times with the same title but with different official course designations. “Atmosphere and Ocean,” for example, is listed as EOS257 in the Earth and oceanographic science department and as PHYS257 in the physics department. Bowdoin refers to these as “cross-listed,” and we pay close attention in our analyses to the patterns of cross-listing, as these shed some light on Bowdoin’s instructional intent.

Some courses have multiple sections that are indicated in the “Class Enrollments” report with a letter suffix to the course designation. The two sections of “Scientific Reasoning in Biology,” for example, are listed as BIO109A and BIO109B. Some courses have numerous sections. In fall 2011, five sections of “Principles of Microeconomics” were offered.

In our analyses we also pay attention to “courses” and “sections.” It is an important distinction. Distinct *courses* tell us about the total range of academic subjects Bowdoin taught in the 2011–2012 academic year. Distinct *sections* tell us about the courses most in demand among students and most emphasized by departments. They also reflect Bowdoin’s commitment to maintaining relatively small class sizes.

⁷⁶“Answers to Frequently Asked Questions,” Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/faqs.shtml>.

reports in its Common Data Set 2011–2012 that the actual enrollments (as opposed to course caps) for fall 2011 were as follows:

Figure 22: Undergraduate Class Section Sizes, Fall 2011⁷⁷

								Total
Number of Enrolled Students	2–9	10–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–99	100+	
Number of Class Sections	87	177	45	52	23	5	0	389

Source: “Common Data Set 2011–2012,” Bowdoin College, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/images/cds2011-12.pdf>.

Bowdoin makes frequent mention of its student-faculty ratio of 9 to 1. Clearly, only a small proportion of courses match this ratio. In fall 2011, 22 percent of the courses had nine or fewer students. The preponderance of small enrollment courses (two to nine students) are advanced level classes.⁷⁸

How Bowdoin Creates Courses

Academic courses enunciate what the faculty judge to be the best units of formal instruction.

Courses at Bowdoin must be approved at multiple levels. New courses and major course revisions originate at the department level. They are next submitted to the Curriculum Implementation Committee (CIC), which “reviews course proposals.” CIC is made up of five faculty members meant to represent the three major divisions of the college—humanities and arts, natural sciences and mathematics, and social and behavioral sciences—always including one faculty member in the foreign languages. The CIC also has two student representatives (and one alternate student representative). The associate dean for academic affairs presides over the CIC, which is charged with examining the content of a proposed course as well as other details of curricular “implementation” such as “revisions to individual majors/minors,” oversight of “off-campus study,” approval of “self-designed majors,” and rules regarding “grading, honors, transfer of credit and progress towards degree.”⁷⁹

Upon CIC approval, a proposal is forwarded to the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee (CEP), which is presided over by the dean for academic affairs and composed of six

⁷⁷Note that the total of 389 class sections in Bowdoin’s count is smaller than the 420 sections we were able to identify from the fall 2011 enrollment report. We cannot account for the discrepancy.

⁷⁸The “Class Enrollment” report also includes laboratory sections of individual courses. Because laboratory sections are always attached to the main section of a course, they are best thought of as subsections and we have omitted them from our main list. Courses in the natural sciences, languages, and the arts typically have required laboratory sections.

⁷⁹See, “Committee on Governance Motion on Proposed Faculty Governance Structure: Faculty Handbook Text Approved by the Faculty February 4, 2008,” Bowdoin College, Academic Affairs, Faculty Governance, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/faculty-governance/pdf/FacGovernanceApproved.2.4.08.pdf>.

tenured or tenure-track faculty members meant to represent the three major divisions of the college. The CEP also has two student representatives and one alternate. It is responsible for “broad oversight of the curriculum, and for proposing changes in academic policy and degree requirements for consideration by the faculty.” New courses and major course revisions must get CEP approval, but in contrast to the CIC, CEP seems to focus on the curricular context of a course rather than its specific content. Its official charge does not go into the details of course review.⁸⁰

After the CEP has approved a new course, it sends the proposal and its recommended action to the Bowdoin faculty for consideration at its regular meeting, which occurs nine times each academic year. The flow of course approval is:

academic department → CIC → CEP → faculty as a whole, voting in assembly

In examining the minutes of the “Regular Meeting of the Faculty” from Fall 1994 to Fall 2011, we found no recorded instance of discussion or debate on the creation of new courses, majors, or minors. Where votes are recorded, they are all unanimous.

In principle, every academic course at Bowdoin has undergone these multiple levels of review in addition to passing the approval of the department, or for cross-listed courses, departments in which it is offered.

American higher education can be thought of as a fairly regulated industry. Federal and state education departments have a say in designating what can count as a “credit hour” and “seat time” for a college course, and accreditation agencies also pay attention to these definitions. Bowdoin must comply with these rules and thus the definition of a “course” at Bowdoin in 2011–2012 reflects regulatory compliance as well as academic judgment. At the federal level, Bowdoin’s eligibility to be a recipient of federal student loans depends on compliance with these rules.

Bowdoin requires its academic departments to undergo “department and program review” by outside academics “in the appropriate field” roughly every ten years. These are occasions to review:

curricular offerings, identify strengths and weaknesses, envision the future shape of the curriculum, articulate goals and aspirations, and consider the implications of intellectual, technological, and pedagogical developments in a discipline.⁸¹

We have not had access to any of the documents in these reviews but presume that they too help to shape the selection, content, and pedagogy of courses at Bowdoin.

⁸⁰Ibid. The CEP minutes are “closed for 20 years from date of creation,” according to a description of this series, catalog no. 1.7.4, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME, <http://library.bowdoin.edu/arch/archives/regsd.shtml#004>.

⁸¹“Procedures for Department and Program Reviews,” Bowdoin College, Academic Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/forms-policies/policies/department-reviews.shtml>.

These multiple layers of review and approval mean that every course offered at Bowdoin has significant institutional warrant. No course is a fluke. None is offered simply because a faculty member or a group of students or faculty thought it would be a good idea. Instead, a proposal is examined by a department concerned with the integrity of its total offerings, by two college-wide committees representing the three divisions as well as students and presided over by academic administrators, and by the faculty operating in assembly. To this must be added the safeguards of regulatory approval and Bowdoin’s own recourse to periodic outside peer review.

The details of the process of course approval show that Bowdoin is making deliberate decisions about its curriculum, but those details show nothing about the quality of judgments that are made. How many proposed courses does Bowdoin reject? What does it aim at in approving new courses? On these matters Bowdoin is opaque. The minutes of CEP meetings are closed. The *Bowdoin Course Catalogue* shows the collective results of its judgments. In this and the two following chapters, we examine the curriculum that has emerged from these decisions, which allows us to make some inferences about the standards that are in play.

Subjects and Enrollments

In fall 2011, Bowdoin offered courses in forty subject areas, although not all of these subject areas are departments or programs. For example, Bowdoin listed two courses in Arabic, but it has no Arabic department or program. The 381 academic courses⁸² offered that semester were distributed among the forty subjects as follows:

Figure 23: Total Courses by Department/Program, Fall 2011

Subject	No. of Courses	No. of Students	Subject	No. of Courses	No. of Students
Africana Studies	12	169	Gay & Lesbian Studies	4	71
Anthropology	9	159	Gender & Women’s Studies	12	233
Arabic	2	26	German	6	101
Archaeology	1	49	Government & Legal Studies	26	620
Art History	7	192	Greek	2	12
Asian Studies	11	221	History	24	474
Biology	18	435	Italian	4	95
Computer Science	6	123	Japanese	3	23
Chemistry	8	296	Latin	3	32
Chinese	4	39	Latin American Studies	12	254
Classics	3	52	Mathematics	15	498
Dance	11	148	Music	18	327
Economics	13	521	Philosophy	6	149
Education	9	232	Physics & Astronomy	10	210

⁸²The number “381” differs from the number of “distinct academic courses” (317) given above because, in this case, the count includes “cross-listed courses.” That is to say, there are courses counted multiple times because they appear under separate course designations for different departments. In a later stage of this analysis, we remove these redundancies. Here we worked with the data as Bowdoin presented it, except that we have factored out multiple sections of the same courses where they are listed within a department. For example, BIO109A and BIO109B, “Scientific Reasoning in Biology,” are counted as one course in the number 381. Our count of the number of students enrolled in this course is the sum of all the students enrolled in all the sections of the course.

English	22	399	Psychology	13	354
Earth & Oceanographic Science	8	176	Religion	9	148
Environmental Studies	18	395	Russian	5	44
Film Studies	2	46	Sociology	8	247
French	7	121	Spanish	10	229
			Theater	8	145
			Visual Art	12	204

Note that fifty-five of these courses are listed multiple times. “Black Women, Politics, Music, and the Divine,” for example, is taught by a faculty member in Africana studies but is also under different course numbers in three other departments: gender and women’s studies, music, and religion. These fifty-five courses with cross-listings comprise 119 items in the table above. Likewise, the table counts students enrolled in such courses multiple times. The thirteen students enrolled in “Black Women Politics Music Divine” are counted, for example, as thirteen students in Africana studies, thirteen students in gender and women’s studies, thirteen students in music, and 13 students in religion.

Bowdoin students normally take four courses per semester. The cross-listings make it appear that the number of students or the number of courses they take are higher than is really the case. If multiple sections of the same course are counted toward the total of courses, there were 381 courses with enrolled students in fall 2011.⁸³

The best way to read this and the following chart is as a broad map of which subjects at Bowdoin have the greatest curricular elaboration and which subjects draw the highest enrollments. The cross-listings, however, introduce an element of distortion that we address separately.

The 401 academic courses offered in spring 2012 were distributed among the forty-one subjects. (The one additional subject not offered in fall 2011 was an “independent studies” class.)

Figure 24: Total Courses by Department/Program, Spring 2012

Subject	No. of Courses	No. of Courses	Subject	No. of Courses	No. of Courses
Africana Studies	18	363	Gender & Women’s Studies	16	348
Anthropology	9	257	German	6	95
Arabic	2	19	Government & Legal Studies	27	623
Archaeology	3	109	Greek	2	17
Art History	8	149	History	21	456
Asian Studies	11	184	Independent Studies	1	37
Biology	17	425	Italian	5	74
Computer Science	6	186	Japanese	4	20
Chemistry	9	297	Latin	3	30
Chinese	4	35	Latin American Studies	14	306

Classics	3	169	Mathematics	14	466
Dance	8	88	Music	23	486
Economics	13	491	Philosophy	8	124
Education	7	174	Physics & Astronomy	10	241
English	22	401	Psychology	13	347
Earth & Oceanographic Science	8	154	Religion	11	172
Environmental Studies	18	440	Russian	4	31
Film Studies	2	45	Sociology	11	287
French	8	106	Spanish	9	180
Gay & Lesbian Studies	7	188	Theater	7	125
			Visual Art	9	170

Note that the same caveats apply here as to the previous table. This chart includes seventy-one courses that are listed multiple times. These seventy-one courses with cross-listings comprise 158 items in the table. If the multiple listings of the same course are put back into the count, there were 401 courses with enrolled students in spring 2012.

A, B, C

Bowdoin traditionally groups subjects into three areas: natural science and mathematics, social and behavioral sciences, and humanities and arts. These are designated in the course catalog as “a,” “b,” and “c.” Bowdoin’s Office of Institutional Research sometimes adds a fourth grouping: interdisciplinary studies. We have followed that precedent.

The official a, b, and c designations do not always match the department. For example, most of the courses in Africana studies are designated “c” for “humanities,” but the course “Racism” is designated “b” for “social and behavioral sciences.”

Figure 25: Divisional Groupings of Courses and Enrollments: Fall 2011, Spring 2012

Divisional Grouping	Fall 2011		Spring 2012	
	No. of Courses	Total Enrollment	No. of Courses	Total Enrollment
Natural Science and Mathematics	74	1,907	73	1,982
Social and Behavioral Sciences	81	2,239	87	2,386
Humanities and Arts	173	3,103	169	2,947
Interdisciplinary	53	1,032	72	1,518

Bowdoin classifies history as a “humanities” course and we have followed that designation. In general, we have classified all departments and subject areas as belonging to a single division, but we made an exception with “Environmental Studies.” Course offerings in this department are a mixture of natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Some of the course descriptions in the *Catalogue* explicitly note environmental studies courses as “interdisciplinary.”

We have placed all courses in Africana studies, Asian studies, gay and lesbian studies, gender and women’s studies, and Latin American studies in the interdisciplinary category.

Bowdoin’s practice of cross-listing courses also complicates this table. A course listed in the history department is treated as a “humanity.” The same course cross-listed in gay and lesbian studies is treated as “interdisciplinary.” The warrant for this is pedagogical intent.

What would happen if we divided the humanities from the arts?

Figure 26: Grouping of Courses and Enrollments with Humanities Divided from Arts: Fall 2011, Spring 2012

Grouping of Courses	Fall 2011		Spring 2012	
	No. of Courses	Total Enrollment	No. of Courses	Total Enrollment
Humanities	123	2,279	122	2,078
Arts	49	824	47	869

How much of the humanities consists of foreign language courses?

Figure 27: Groupings of Courses and Enrollments with Humanities Divided from Arts and Languages: Fall 2011, Spring 2012

Grouping of Courses	Fall 2011		Spring 2012	
	No. of Courses	Total Enrollment	No. of Courses	Total Enrollment
Humanities without Foreign Languages	77 of 123	1,507	75 of 122	1,471
Foreign Languages	46 of 123	772	47 of 122	607

Analysis

At the level of course offerings in the 2011–2012 academic year, the Bowdoin curriculum looks very much like a standard liberal arts college curriculum. In either semester, about a fifth of the courses are in the sciences, and about a fourth of the enrollments are in these courses. That is, science courses at Bowdoin draw a somewhat disproportionate share of students. Interdisciplinary studies present a similar picture. About 15 percent of courses were in interdisciplinary studies. In the fall 13 percent of the enrollments and in the spring about 17 percent of the enrollments were in these courses.

Bowdoin, like virtually every modern college, has long since retired any idea of a special place for Latin and Greek in the curriculum, but unlike many colleges and universities today it has maintained a vigorous program in foreign language instruction. Fourteen to 15 percent of its courses are in foreign languages, and approximately 8 percent of its enrollments are in these courses. While these figures are a small fraction of what foreign language enrollments once were, they contrast sharply to Bowdoin’s faculty assessment as recently as 1986 that held “familiarity with a second language as an important part of a liberal arts education.”⁸⁴

A comparison of Bowdoin’s 2011–2012 course offerings with those of other colleges today would reveal few significant differences. A comparison of Bowdoin’s 2011–2012 courses with those Bowdoin offered in decades past would show some important differences, but not many at the level of the topics ostensibly covered or the portions of the curriculum devoted to those topics. The most striking exception to this generalization is the rise since 1969 of the various interdisciplinary studies programs, which we began to chart in our Preliminaries on Bowdoin’s history. We have more to say on that below.

Deeper changes to the curriculum that are not visible at this level of analysis do exist. These changes involve the near disappearance of survey courses, the thinness of prerequisites in many areas of study, the “flattening” of the curriculum in contrast to the conception of liberal study as a coherent progression of courses, and the rarity of courses that focus on synthesis and integration, despite Bowdoin’s heavy emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge.

Our analysis so far also has a built-in limit. Bowdoin’s cross-listing of courses makes the number of courses and the number of enrollments appear to be significantly greater than they actually are.

Cross-Listing

Cross-listing of courses is a common phenomenon in contemporary American higher education and one that has received relatively little attention. We have found that at Bowdoin it

⁸⁴“The 1986 Aug, Institutional Self-Study Outline,” catalog no. 1.29, vol. 4, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Brunswick, ME. Also note Brown summarizing President Sills’s position circa 1938: “To schoolmen who saw no loss in dropping Greek and Latin from the high school curriculum, [Sills] predicted they would soon be equally indifferent to the value of modern languages.” *Sills of Bowdoin*, 326.

sheds light on some larger curricular issues. In this section we document the extent and nature of cross-listing and offer a few comments on why it is significant.

In fall 2011, Bowdoin offered fifty-five courses that were cross-listed. In Bowdoin's official course listing, these fifty-five courses account for 119 separate courses, each with its own course designation. The most cross-listed courses were: "Black Women, Politics, Music, and the Divine" (4), "African American Writers" (3), "Francophone Cultures" (3), "Hispanic Caribbean Literature" (3), "Goddesses & Women Hindu Tradition" (3), "Romantic Sexualities" (3), "Atmosphere and Ocean Dynamics" (3), and "Ecological Thought in Latin American Literature" (3); the remaining forty-seven courses were cross-listed twice.

In spring 2012, Bowdoin offered seventy-one courses that were cross-listed. In the college's official course listing, these seventy-one courses account for 158 separate courses, each with its own course designation. The most cross-listed courses were: "Introduction to Francophone Literature" (3), "Race, Class, Gender & Urban Crisis" (3), "Race & Sexuality in Modern America" (3), "Protest Music" (3), "Black Women and Religion" (3), "French Caribbean Child Memories" (3), "James Baldwin" (3), "Sex & Politics of Body in India" (3), "Religion, Culture & Politics in Southeast Asia" (3), "Bird Song, Human Song" (3), "Perspective in Environment Science" (3), "Earth Climate History" (3), "Introduction to LGBTQ Fiction" (3), "Victorian Race and Empire" (3), "Science, Sex and Politics" (3), "US-Mexico Borderlands" (3); the remaining fifty-five courses were each listed twice.

Appendix III provides a chart of all fall 2011 cross-listed courses that shows each course by title, number of times listed, multiple course designations, instructor, and instructor's home department. Appendix IV provides the same information for spring 2012 cross-listed courses.

Bowdoin's academic departments vary considerably in the degree to which cross-listed courses populate their offerings. The following table shows our calculation of the percentage of cross-listed courses listed in the registrar's "Class Enrollment" report for fall 2011:

Figure 28: Number and Percentage of Cross-Listed Courses by Department: Fall 2011

Number of Cross-Listings by Department/Program	Percentage of Semester Offerings
Africana Studies: 10 of 12	83
Anthropology: 1 of 9	11
Arabic: 0 of 2	0
Archaeology: ⁸⁵ 1 of 1	100
Art History: 1 of 7	14

⁸⁵Archaeology is a major/minor offered by the classics department and is called "Classical Archaeology." Even though it is an offering in classics, it is designated as "Arch" in both the *Bowdoin College Catalogue* and the "Class Enrollment" report.

Asian Studies: 9 of 11	82 ⁸⁶
Biology: 8 of 18	44
Chemistry: 0 of 8	0
Chinese: 0 of 4	0
Classics: ⁸⁷ 1 of 3	33
Computer Science: 0 of 6	0
Dance: ⁸⁸ 2 of 11	18
Earth & Oceanographic Science: 3 of 8	38
Economics: 1 of 13	8
Education: 1 of 9	11
English: 8 of 22	36
Environmental Studies: 13 of 18	72
Film Studies: 0 of 2	0
French: 1 of 7	14
Gay and Lesbian Studies: 3 of 4	75
Gender and Women's Studies: 8 of 12	67
German: 0 of 6	0
Government and Legal Studies: 4 of 26	15
Greek: 0 of 2	0
History: 12 of 24	50
Italian: 0 of 4	0
Japanese: 0 of 0	0
Latin: 0 of 3	0
Latin American Studies: 11 of 12	92

⁸⁶One reason why Asian studies has so many cross-listed courses is that most of the Asian studies faculty have joint appointments.

⁸⁷Even though, as noted above, the "Arch" is technically drawn from the Classics department, this total does not include any "Arch" courses, only those designated as "Clas."

⁸⁸Bowdoin's theater and dance department contains, of course, theater and dance faculty. Because each faculty member is hired as an instructor in *either* theater or in dance, however, Bowdoin has cross-listed some dance courses with theater and vice versa.

Mathematics: 1 of 15	7
Music: 2 of 18	11
Philosophy: 0 of 6	6
Physics: 1 of 10	10
Psychology: 1 of 13	8
Religion: 3 of 9	33
Russian: 0 of 5	0
Sociology: 2 of 8	25
Spanish: 6 of 10	60
Theater: 3 of 8	38
Visual Art: 1 of 12	8

Academic departments are exporters as well as importers of cross-listed courses. The biggest exporters are English and history. The biggest importers are Latin American studies and environmental studies. The breakdown is fully detailed in appendix V.

We have taken the trouble to excavate this information from Bowdoin’s records because it bears directly on the question, “What Does Bowdoin Teach?” Bowdoin teaches, among other things, that the academic disciplines and the larger divisions—science, social science, and humanities—are artificial constructs and that the knowledge (in many cases) most worth pursuing in a liberal arts education lies in web of connections that links disparate topics and approaches.

The web of cross-listed courses represents a certain way of seeing the world. It also carries forward other aspects of Bowdoin’s interpretation of the liberal arts. For example, cross-listing affords faculty the opportunity to offer rather specialized and sometimes esoteric courses on the theory that they serve the didactic purpose of uniting disparate fields. And cross-listing gives Bowdoin’s curriculum an appearance of thoughtful integration, since cross-listing aims at uniting what was previously divided.

Cross-listed courses are also an index of salient topics at Bowdoin. These courses capture themes that are prominent in more than one department and thus represent some of the faculty’s larger concerns. Cross-listing is highly correlated with interdisciplinary studies: Africana studies, Asian studies, environmental studies, gay and lesbian studies, gender and women’s studies, and Latin American studies. Cross-listing has produced most of the curricula for these departments except Asian studies. The history and English departments are the most significant “exporters” of the courses that comprise this interstitial curriculum, which reveals the prominence of the underlying topics within those departments.

Pedagogical Approaches

Bowdoin teaches its curriculum in a variety of course formats that embody different pedagogical approaches. The college, as far as we can tell, does not formally classify courses by pedagogical approach. To analyze this aspect of the curriculum, we have reviewed all 317 courses taught in fall 2011 and all 314 courses taught in spring 2012 and classified them in a six-fold scheme:

Survey courses: Present a broad conspectus of a subject or discipline, e.g., ES101, “Introduction to Environmental Studies.”

Introductory courses: Introduce students to a limited part of a discipline and are generally intended to be followed by more advanced courses, e.g., ECON101, “Principles of Microeconomics.”

Intermediate courses: Presume the student has already achieved basic mastery of relevant ideas, definitions, or techniques and is ready to move to the next level, e.g., FR203, “Intermediate French.” Courses may be more specialized than introductory courses, but rather than having a narrow topical focus they attempt to balance broadening and deepening the student’s understanding of a field.

Topical courses: Deal with relatively specialized topics, e.g., ENG236, “Romantic Sexualities.” Like intermediate courses, they often have prerequisites, but are not generally conceived as taking the student to the next level of a body of knowledge organized in a hierarchy from elementary to advanced. Rather, they explore a single subject, often from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Capstone courses: Help the relatively advanced student draw together and synthesize knowledge and understanding from previous courses for a better rounded understanding of a particular field or several related fields, e.g., EDUC302, “Student Teaching Practicum.”

Summit courses: Are taught at an advanced level that takes the student deep into a specialized area of study, e.g., PHYS310, “Quantum Mechanics.” Like capstone courses, they may require the student to draw on and synthesize material from a variety of previous courses, but their pedagogical goal is less a matter of looking back to order what has already been learned and more a matter of looking toward the next level of intellectual inquiry.

To apply these distinctions, we had four individuals code all the courses in the 2011–2012 academic year. We then compared their independent results. In cases where disagreement among the coders existed, we examined the course description as a group and reached a consensus. The coding, of course, was an imperfect process. Sometimes it was difficult to discern whether a course could be better described as “survey” or “introduction,” and where the dividing line between “intermediate” and “topical” should be drawn. But the categorizations nonetheless

remain a useful organizing scheme to analyze this important dimension of the Bowdoin curriculum.

Bowdoin’s system of numbering courses points to a rough progression: all courses numbered below 100 (e.g., SOC010, “Racism”) are “first-year [freshman] seminars”; courses numbered 100 to 199 are generally survey and introductory courses; courses in the 200s typically have prerequisites and account for most of those we classified as “intermediate” or “topical”; courses in the 300s are relatively advanced and account for most of those we classified as “capstone” or “summit.”

On the whole, we found that Bowdoin offers relatively few survey courses and hardly any capstone courses. We also found that Bowdoin offers a strikingly large number of topical courses that build only lightly on the student’s previous studies. The balance of intermediate and topical courses differed considerably among the disciplines and divisions. The physical sciences and mathematics curricula have a preponderance of courses that build in defined sequences. The humanities and interdisciplinary studies curricula have a preponderance of stand-alone topical courses.

For fall 2011, we found:

Figure 29: Pedagogical Approaches: Fall 2011

	Survey	Intro	Intermediate	Topical	Capstone	Summit
Number of Courses	7	72	119	102	5	12

For spring 2012, we found:

Figure 30: Pedagogical Approaches: Spring 2012

	Survey	Intro	Intermediate	Topical	Capstone	Summit
Number of Courses	14	66	124	85	6	19

For the sake of comparison, we examined the courses included in the *Bowdoin College Bulletin* for 1964–1965:

Figure 31: Pedagogical Approaches: 1964–1965

	Survey	Intro	Intermediate	Topical	Capstone	Summit
Number of Courses	44	51	187	5	12	10

In 1964 we found a total of 309 courses in the *Bulletin*, but these are not broken down by semester. The 2011–2012 *Bowdoin College Catalogue*, by contrast, lists approximately 1,225 courses, of which about six hundred were actually offered during the 2011–2012 academic year.⁸⁹

In the 1964 *Bulletin*, only three courses were cross-listed: Psychology 8, “Educational Psychology,” is cross-listed in education, and History 13 and 14, “The History of Political Thought in the West,” is cross-listed in government and legal studies. In 2011–2012 the registrar’s course list alone cross-listed 126 courses.

The data show significant shifts in pattern. In 1964, 14 percent of Bowdoin’s offerings were survey courses. In fall 2011, this figure dropped to 2.2 percent. In 1964, only about five of 309 of Bowdoin’s courses, 1.6 percent, were topical. By fall 2011, a third of Bowdoin’s courses—32.2 percent—were topical. Figure 32 shows the whole set of comparisons.

Figure 32: Percentage of Course Offerings According to Pedagogical Approach

	Survey (%)	Intro (%)	Intermediate (%)	Topical (%)	Capstone (%)	Summit (%)
1964 <i>Bulletin</i>	14.2	16.5	60.5	1.6	3.9	3.2
Fall 2011	2.2	22.7	37.2	32.2	1.6	3.8
Spring 2012	4.4	21.0	39.5	27.1	1.9	6.0

Perhaps the most significant change over this forty-eight-year period is the shift from an emphasis on intermediate to topical courses. Observe as well the significant shift from survey to introductory course offerings and a decline in capstone courses.

Pedagogical Approach in Historical Perspective

These shifts over nearly half a century and the current pattern of pedagogical approaches correspond closely with other changes we have pointed out.

A. Bowdoin’s current emphasis on topical courses is a response to its earlier decision to replace traditional liberal arts education with what it called a “liberating” approach.

This shift involved two components: the abolition of general education requirements and the replacement of the college as responsible for defining the content of “liberal education” with the idea that the student ought to judge for himself what he should learn.

⁸⁹The estimate of 600 was derived by adding the fall 2011 (317) and spring 2012 (314) course lists, which totals 632, and then subtracting 31 as an estimate of the number of courses that were offered both semesters.

In 1970, under President Howell, Bowdoin relinquished the idea of a curriculum ordered primarily by the faculty's judgment of what a liberal arts education should be. As the *Bowdoin Catalogue* of 1970 put the new vision:

Bowdoin does not prescribe a pattern of required liberal arts courses for all students. Instead, each student determines, with the help and approval of his academic counselor, what pattern of courses is most "liberating" for him.⁹⁰

In the section titled "Liberation," in our Preliminary on "Bowdoin's History," we described the philosophical and ideological rationalizations for this shift. In practical terms, it left Bowdoin students with minimal requirements for graduation. Under Howell, a student needed only to complete thirty-two courses and a major to graduate. This meant that the requirements of the college major were the only constraints Bowdoin imposed on the choice and sequence of the academic courses a student would take. In later years, as we reported, Bowdoin drew back somewhat from this extreme position. In 2006, for example, Bowdoin began *requiring* first-year students to take "first-year seminars."

But to a great extent, Howell's de-structuring of the Bowdoin curriculum has remained in force. Bowdoin continues to see liberal arts education as a matter of the student choosing a collection of courses that suit his developing interests, constrained mostly by the requirements of departmental majors. How constraining is that constraint? We have more to say about this below, but here we are considering pedagogical developments. The proliferation of topical courses gives students many options to meet the requirements of a major, and thus gives life to the post-1970 liberationist conception of a liberal arts curriculum. The major, in most cases, rather than imposing tight restrictions on what the Bowdoin student must study instead conforms to the idea that student choice is supreme—students should have options and decide for themselves what they want to study, even within a major.

This generalization is truer in some departments than it is in others, and we will come to that.

B. Bowdoin's shift away from survey courses reflects a different view of the intellectual authority of academic departments and faculty members.

The shift away from survey courses is also part of the post-1970 liberationist conception of the curriculum. Survey courses necessarily present a department's considered judgment about the most important parts of a large body of knowledge and how these parts stand in relation to one another. In 1964 Bowdoin had twenty-five departments, nine of which offered survey courses.⁹¹ Of the forty-four survey courses, twenty-six were part of two-semester sequences. Bowdoin today has thirty-three departments and programs,

⁹⁰*Bowdoin College Bulletin 1970–1971*, 77.

⁹¹Of the twenty-five departments in 1964, only twenty offered a major.

eight of which offer survey courses. Of the twenty-one survey courses, six are part of two-semester sequences.

C. The proliferation of courses and other curricular options corresponds to the idea that the liberal arts are best conceived as the individual student's self-determined path of intellectual exploration.

When Bowdoin shifted philosophically to the idea that the student's freedom to choose his own path was the right principle for ordering a liberal education, the college opened up a potentially limitless horizon of curricular possibilities, only a few of which could be met at any one time. The result was the sense that Bowdoin's curriculum was too limited and that the college had to expand its menu of options. Bowdoin offers many more courses today, not only because it has modernized, but because it finds traditional offerings to be too limited and too limiting. In 1964, the *Bowdoin Bulletin* listed 309 courses for an enrollment for approximately 900 students. In 2011–2012, the *Bowdoin College Catalogue* listed 1,225 courses for an enrollment of 1,762 students. Over this period, enrollments have roughly doubled while the number of courses has quadrupled.

The strict course approval process that we outlined may or may not filter out a significant number of proposed courses, but it seems to have done nothing to hinder the entropy of the curriculum. More and more diverse subjects are added every year. The main thing that disappears is general survey courses. Before the centrifugal expansion, students took many more courses in common.

Even this, however, does not capture the extent of the profusion of different subjects offered at Bowdoin today. A large number of Bowdoin students now take independent study and Honors Project courses, which are two forms of study for academic credit. These are largely self-designed courses (under faculty supervision) on subjects not covered in the regular course offerings. Bowdoin in 1964 also offered independent study and Honors Projects. We have been unable to determine how many Bowdoin students at that time took advantage of these options, but the number and percentage of Bowdoin students today who pursue these options is quite high. We have more to say about both programs below.

Bowdoin today also permits students to design their own majors. These self-invented majors require at least one faculty sponsor and eight to twelve courses, four of which can be independent study. Students can also avail themselves of eight "interdisciplinary majors" that anticipate student interest in "certain patterns of interdisciplinary studies."

Capstones

A last observation of Bowdoin's pedagogical approaches: we have left in our analysis the category of "capstone" courses even though they have played a very small role at Bowdoin over the years. Their relative abundance in 1964 (3.9 percent of courses) compared to 2011–2012 (1.6

percent) is due to the institution in the earlier period of Senior Seminars explicitly intended to be capstone courses. Capstone courses have always been a small category because they have served only seniors.

The required senior seminars were abolished as part of the 1970 reforms. Capstone courses are used at many colleges today and were once also a very significant part of the Bowdoin curriculum, but the college's major uses of this pedagogical approach reach back to even earlier eras in its history. Under President Sills (1918–1952), every Bowdoin student had to take a “comprehensive examination” in his major field as a condition of graduation. This examination covered “the whole field, and was not limited to work done in courses.”⁹² The Sills examinations were not part of the formal course structure but they functioned as a curricular capstone that required students to synthesize four years of learning. The Sills examinations survived at least until 1964, where they are still listed as a requirement in the *Bulletin*. Earlier Bowdoin presidents took it upon themselves to teach senior courses that were intended to synthesize the whole of the student's Bowdoin education.

Nothing like this exists today. Bowdoin's curriculum is too fragmented, students study nothing in common, and even the ideal of intellectual synthesis plays too faint a role to provide the basis for a single senior-level course that encompasses everything students have learned.

In the era of the post-1970 reforms, which essentially substituted the student's private vision of educational progress for a college-mediated ideal of liberal education, it makes sense that capstone courses would be rare. The few courses that we have designated as capstones for 2011–2012 are judgment calls on our part for advanced courses that seem to demand a strenuous effort to integrate a large amount of preceding material. Thus we have put HIST332, “Community in America, in Maine, and at Bowdoin,” in the capstone category. It is:

A research seminar that explores ideals and social, economic, political, and cultural realities of community in American history, and examines continuity, change, and socio-economic, racial, and ethnic diversity in community experience. Begins with studies of communities in seventeenth-century Massachusetts and early national upstate New York; then focuses on Maine and on Bowdoin College and its midcoast neighborhood, with readings in both the secondary literature and a wealth of primary sources.⁹³

We also put MUS361, “Topics in Music Theory: Orchestration,” in as a capstone course:

An in-depth examination of factors to consider when writing for modern orchestral instruments. Students become familiar with all such instruments and arrange and transcribe works for ensembles such as string quartet, woodwind quartet, brass quintet, percussion ensemble, and full orchestra. Students also study scores by composers such as

⁹²Brown, *Sills of Bowdoin*, 229.

⁹³*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 217.

Brahms, Mahler, Ravel, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Takemitsu in order to further their knowledge of the techniques of instrumentation.⁹⁴

Neither of these really rises to the level of Bowdoin's nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ideal of a culminating experience that demands the student integrate the entirety of his educational endeavors, but we do see in them some of this spirit of summation and integration, which contrasts with Bowdoin's more typical pedagogical culmination in greater specialization.

Honors Projects

It is possible that Bowdoin's Honors Projects sometimes fill the role of capstone projects. We have insufficient information on these projects to make an assured judgment. Where we do have lists on Honors Projects, they appear to be more in the spirit of advanced specialization or what we have called "summit" courses. A 2010 *Bowdoin Orient* story reported on Erica Ehrhardt, a German and biochemistry double major, whose honors project was a study of lobster hearts.⁹⁵ A list of honors projects connected with Bowdoin's Coastal Studies Center (2001–2011) is made up entirely of specialized studies, including that by Francis Armstrong, "Environmental Induction of Twinning in Echinoids" (2011).⁹⁶ A list of honors projects connected with physics and astronomy (1993–2011) likewise consists solely of specialized studies, including Michael Mitchell's "Computer Modeling of Surface Acoustic Waves on Water Loaded Surfaces" (2011).⁹⁷

Advancement in the sciences, of course, is characterized by specialization. Recent honors projects in history are somewhat more capacious but remain in the spirit of highly focused examinations of narrow topics rather than reflecting efforts to synthesize.⁹⁸ The 2010–2011 list of honors projects in history names six, five of which are clearly specialized:

- Ellen C.S. Kimball—*The Fourth Reich: Argentina's Welcoming of Nazi Fugitives During the Peron Era*
- Nicholas Updike Pisegna — "'Beisbol's Been Very, Very Good to Me'" *The Evolution of Major League Baseball Labor Markets in Cuba and the Dominican Republic*
- Elyse Terry—*Demonstrating Unity: A Consideration of Protest and Response as Mechanisms of Change on College Campuses*
- Alexander Stetson Vertrees—*Pick up the Pieces: German National Character after the Holocaust*

⁹⁴Ibid., 244.

⁹⁵Sara Kwasny, "Senior Honors Project Research Gets to the Heart of Things," *Bowdoin Orient*, February 19, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5039>.

⁹⁶"Honors Projects," Bowdoin College, Coastal Studies Center, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/coastal-studies-center/student-research/honors-projects.shtml>.

⁹⁷"Past Honors Projects," Bowdoin College, Physics and Astronomy, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/physics/student-research/honors.shtml>.

⁹⁸"Past Honors Projects Archive," Bowdoin College, History, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/history/student-research/honors-projects-archive.shtml>.

- Leah Kate Weiss—*The Creation and Dissolution of an Einheitgemeinde: Jewish Identity in Berlin from 1945–1953*

One of the honors projects in history might be a candidate for a capstone designation:

- Wesley Rockwell Fleuchaus—*From Colonization to Emancipation: Lincoln's Allegiance to the Disappearing Center*

Judging from the title alone, however, it is impossible to say.⁹⁹

Student Research: Independent Studies and Honors Projects

Independent studies are an important part of Bowdoin's educational project. We are unable to quantify with any precision how large a part this is, either in terms of the number of students enrolled in independent study in a given semester or what percentage of Bowdoin students today pursue this option, but we have considerable indirect evidence that suggests that the number and the percentage is large. Bowdoin's *2006 Self-Study* described the college's pedagogical emphasis on student research:

Bowdoin values student engagement in faculty research or in independent research or artistic work with faculty guidance. Independent study and summer research opportunities provide the major vehicles for this activity.¹⁰⁰

How much so?

In the graduating class of 2005, 65% of the students had taken one or more independent studies with faculty members—a total of 575 independent study courses. At Bowdoin, independent study courses are the primary vehicles for students to do honors projects, something that 25% of Bowdoin seniors accomplished in the class of 2005, up from 16% in the class of 2001. . . . Independent studies constituted 6.6% of the enrollments in the sciences in 2004, but only 3.9% and 3.6% respectively in the social sciences and the humanities. Of the 2005 summer fellowships, 80% were awarded to students in the natural sciences.¹⁰¹

Bowdoin students have the option to pursue two types of independent studies: intermediate and advanced.

Bowdoin's 2011–2012 *Catalogue* lists thirty-two of thirty-three departments and programs offering Intermediate Independent Study, a one-semester, student-generated research project on a topic agreed upon by a student and a faculty member. It enables the student to pursue subjects pertinent to his discipline but not offered by the faculty in his declared major.

⁹⁹We requested assistance from two offices at Bowdoin to obtain further information on independent research and Honors Projects. Both declined their assistance without explanation.

¹⁰⁰*Bowdoin Self-Study 2006*, 31.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

Likewise, the *Catalogue* lists thirty-two of thirty-three departments and programs offering Advanced Independent Study, described only as “Original or creative projects and honors courses.”¹⁰² A two-semester, student-generated research project on a topic agreed upon by a student and a faculty member, the Advanced Independent Study also serves for many departments as the method for determining departmental honors. The English department website, for example, says that “All honors projects begin as advanced independent studies, but not all advanced independent studies become honors projects.”¹⁰³

For an advanced independent study in English to become an honors project, the student must work with three professors and produce a thirty-five-page honors thesis by the end of the project’s second semester. By contrast, an advanced independent study that is not an honors project requires only one faculty advisor and does not require a thesis. The honors project student must also meet “with department faculty as a group for a conversation about his or her project.”¹⁰⁴ The history department calls this meeting the “Honors Defense.”¹⁰⁵ The final criteria are that the candidate for honors must be a senior and have maintained an A or B average.¹⁰⁶ The path to obtaining honors in the English department is comparable to those of other departments at Bowdoin. The only major distinction is the levels of honors awarded. The English department awards only one level of honors, the economics department, by contrast, awards three.¹⁰⁷

The intermediate independent study counts as a full course, decreasing the student’s presence in the classroom and increasing his time in the field, library, or laboratory. The advanced independent study counts as two courses. For twenty-first-century Bowdoin the advanced independent study and honors project is often the undergraduate’s culminating educational experience. This sort of academic inquiry matches the highly individualized vision of liberal education that Bowdoin promotes.

We do not have an exact count of the number of honors projects students undertook in our focal academic year, 2011–2012, but we have data on preceding years that show that roughly a fifth of graduating seniors successfully completed these projects. (We have no data on students who pursued honors projects and did not receive departmental honors.)

¹⁰²*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2011-2012*, 39.

¹⁰³“Frequently Asked Questions: About the Major in English,” Bowdoin College, Curriculum & Requirements, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/english/curriculum/frequently-asked-questions.shtml#honors>.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵“Guidelines for Honors Projects in History,” Bowdoin College, History, Requirements, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/history/curriculum-requirements/guidelines-for-honors-projects.shtml>.

¹⁰⁶This may not be a high hurdle. The systematic data we have on grade inflation is limited to the period from 1991–1992 to 2000–2001. In academic year 2000–2001, the average grade at Bowdoin was 3.29—essentially an A-. Gregory DeCoster and Jim Hornsten, “Grade Inflation: An Economic Analysis,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 25, 2002, <http://orient.bowdoin.edu/orient/archives/2002-01-25/features03.htm>. Bowdoin’s Office of Institutional Research reported in 2005 that the average grade had increased to 3.33. Miranda Yaver, “Grade Inflation at Bowdoin a Reality,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 28, 2005, <http://orient.bowdoin.edu/orient/article.php?date=2005-10-28§ion=1&id=3>.

¹⁰⁷“Independent Study and Honors,” Bowdoin College, Economics, Curriculum & Requirements, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/economics/curriculum-requirements/independent-study-honors.shtml>.

Figure 33: Number of Honors Projects and Percentage of Graduating Class Who Successfully Completed Honors Projects: 2006–2011¹⁰⁸

	2006–2007	2007–2008	2008–2009	2009–2010	2010–2011
Number of Honors Projects	86	92	81	N/A	91
Number of Graduating Seniors	453	451	451	455	440
Percentage of Graduating Class Who Completed Honors Projects	18.9	20.3	17.9	N/A	20.7

We have emphasized that 1970 was the crucial year in Bowdoin’s history when, at the direction of President Howell, the old model of the curriculum was replaced with a new model based on the idea of “liberating” students from structure and tradition. In our Preface on Bowdoin’s history, however, we describe how Howell’s predecessor, James Stacy Coles (1952–1967), paved the way for some of these changes. Coles’s most significant influence on Bowdoin’s curriculum was to begin the shift from a “collegiate” model focused primarily on instruction to an “innovative” model that emphasized the role of faculty members in pursuing original research and the need for students to participate in the creation of original knowledge.

In “A Decade of Progress: 1952–1962,” Bowdoin trustee Melvin T. Copeland (Class of 1906 and professor of marketing at the Harvard School of Business Administration) recounted Coles’s efforts to put faculty and student research at the center of Bowdoin’s intellectual life. Copeland quoted a passage from the 1961 *Report of the President* in which Coles clarified the place of research in the Bowdoin education:

Basically, research guarantees a liberating future, and its presence is exemplary to the undergraduates of the growth of knowledge. More pragmatically, for the college, research is the eternal price for lively teaching, and the opportunity for its pursuit is an indispensable compensation to be offered in recruiting new faculty of enduring quality.¹⁰⁹

Coles sought a new type of Bowdoin professor and to bend students in this direction. He encouraged student research, including a senior-year fellowship, the purpose of which was “to engage the Fellow directly and responsibly in a serious attempt to extend man’s knowledge in his field and competence.”¹¹⁰ Coles’s most significant innovation was the Senior Center, a new dormitory to house all of Bowdoin’s seniors and, as Coles described it in the *Reports of the President and Dean and the Director of the Senior Center for the Session of 1964–1965*, a “new

¹⁰⁸The data on the number of Honors Projects comes from the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty for the respective years. The data on the number of graduating seniors comes from Bowdoin’s *Campus News* press releases around graduation for the respective years.

¹⁰⁹Melvin T. Copeland, “A Decade of Progress: 1952–1962,” *Bowdoin College Bulletin*, no. 347 (December 1962), 19.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 20.

form in undergraduate education.”¹¹¹ The 1964–1965 *Bulletin* further characterized the curriculum:

The formal academic portion of the Senior Program includes Seminars and an increased emphasis upon independent study. Departmental major work, including honors work for qualified students, and elective courses in various fields of study continue to be fundamental parts of the educational experience during the Senior year.¹¹²

Coles’s project should be seen as the origin of Bowdoin’s contemporary emphasis on independent research and senior projects.

¹¹¹James Stacy Coles, “Reports of the President and Dean and the Director of the Senior Center for the Session of 1964-1965,” Bowdoin College, catalog no. 3.8.3, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Me.

¹¹²*Bowdoin College Bulletin 1964–1965*, 79.

Chapter 2

Academic Instruction: Organization

Academic courses are one component of larger structures within college instruction that include majors and minors. In this chapter we examine these aspects of academic instruction at Bowdoin.

Majors, Minors, Distribution and Division Requirements, and First-Year Seminars

After the 1970 reforms under President Howell, the departmentally defined major and minor were the only curricular structures left intact at Bowdoin. These remain the principal instruments above the level of the individual course that Bowdoin’s faculty members use to exercise control over the content and shape of a student’s education. Bowdoin now offers thirty-three majors and forty minors.

Over the years, but particularly under President Greason (1981–1990), Bowdoin restored certain elements of a more organized curriculum. The key restoration was the reinstatement of distribution requirements—though the ones that emerged are so weak they provide no real guiderails for students or faculty. These distribution requirements function instead as declarations of some key principles held by the faculty.

Bowdoin’s majors and minors push in the direction of student specialization and aim at “depth.” The distribution requirements push in the opposite direction, toward greater intellectual “breadth.” Bowdoin aims, in principle, at a creative tension between depth and breadth.

The *Bowdoin College Catalogue* presents a key statement, “The Curriculum,” that joins this dynamic tension between depth and breadth with Bowdoin’s conception of the highest goal of education, student self-invention. The statement begins with an injunction that places the responsibility for the “design” of an education solely in the hands of the student:

Bowdoin students must design an education in the context of their own developing goals and aspirations and in relation to the College’s vision of a liberal education, its distribution requirements, and the requirements of a major field of study.¹¹³

The concepts of the major, minor, and distribution requirement at Bowdoin cannot really be understood outside this tripartite division of the student as the author of his education, the major (and minor) as an opportunity to achieve “depth,” and the distribution requirements as an institutional prompt to students to venture outside their comfort zones. Bowdoin often introduces

¹¹³*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2011–2012*, 16.

a fourth element into this picture: the faculty member as “wise counselor,” in the phrasing of this particular document. While described as “a vital part of the educational experience,” this faculty advisor is a very weak element in Bowdoin’s conception of how education proceeds. (We have documented the faculty’s own recognition of this weakness in the Preface on Bowdoin’s history and document it further below, in the section on the faculty.)

According to “The Curriculum”:

The distribution requirements encourage exploration and broaden students’ capacities to view and interpret the world from a variety of perspectives

and

the major program challenges students to develop a deeper understanding and self-assurance as independent and creative contributors to an area of study.¹¹⁴

Students “choose” a major, but distribution requirements are presented as something they “must” fulfill, although for their own good, “in order to broaden awareness of the varying ways that academic fields make sense of the world.”

Though majors, minors, distribution requirements, division requirements, and first-year seminars are best understood as parts of a larger framework, it is also useful to examine them individually.

Distribution Requirements

The distribution requirements at Bowdoin are:

- Inquiry in the Natural Sciences
- Mathematical, Computational, and Statistical Reasoning
- Exploring Social Differences
- International Perspectives
- Visual and Performing Arts¹¹⁵

To meet these requirements a student must take one course in each category. Bowdoin encourages but does not require students to complete all five by the end of the sophomore year. Each requirement can be met by taking any of the specially-designated courses listed in the *Catalogue*. The student has many options; the *Catalogue* lists 81 courses, for example, that meet the “Inquiry in the Natural Sciences” distribution.¹¹⁶ Most low-numbered and intermediate science courses qualify. There are 114 courses that meet the Mathematical, Computational, and

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 17.

¹¹⁶The number eighty-one includes courses that are cross-listed in other areas.

Statistical Reasoning requirement, 203 that meet the Exploring Social Differences requirement, 197 that meet the International Perspectives requirement, and 96 that meet the Visual and Performing Arts requirement.

The distribution requirements in science, math, and art seem straightforward. “Exploring Social Differences” and “International Perspectives,” however, require explication. But to follow this we need some history.

Bowdoin’s regional accreditor, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), criticized Bowdoin in its 1996 report, saying that “there seemed to be no theory of general education, no explicit rationale behind the distribution requirements, and no college-wide theory or consistent standards for the major.”¹¹⁷ Bowdoin responded to this, beginning in 1997, by asking the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee (CEP) to reexamine the curriculum. The CEP in its own chronology noted that Bowdoin’s faculty had not reviewed the curriculum as a whole since the late 1980s and the distribution requirements had last been revised in “the early 1980s.” The CEP’s new review of the curriculum and distribution requirements proceeded slowly and eventuated in a summer 2003 outline from a “working group.” In 2004, the CEP built on that outline to offer “a substantially more focused, sharply defined, and limited set of distribution requirements.”¹¹⁸

The CEP spoke frankly about the problem it was attempting to address and listed “six fundamental concerns” that had arisen in discussion with “faculty focus groups.” These were:

1. A lack of a clear and coherent statement of the College’s goals for a liberal education;
2. Lack of clarity about the definition of educational goals apart from “breadth” of the current distribution areas;
3. The lack of guidance to departments and faculty about the educational priorities for courses for non-majors in the absence of a modest collective commitment to goals for general education;
4. A widely perceived inadequacy of the current distribution requirements in guiding students to new and challenging areas of learning;
5. The weakness of any college-wide commitment...to the general education of Bowdoin’s students;

¹¹⁷Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, November 4, 1996, November 1994–present (incomplete coverage), catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹¹⁸“Curriculum for the First Two Years: A Report and Proposal for Discussion,” Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee, Bowdoin College, February 26, 2004, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

6. The isolation of many of our courses from one another, increasing the challenge of students of increasing their intellectual experiences.¹¹⁹

In February and March 2004, the Bowdoin faculty engaged in a debate over the new draft requirements, which prompted the CEP on March 31 to issue to the faculty a fuller account of what the new requirements would entail. This document says that the aim of Exploring Social Differences (ESD) is:

to develop awareness, understanding, and skills of analysis for examining differences such as those in class, environmental conditions, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation across and within societies and the ways that these shape and are shaped by historical, cultural, social, political, economic processes and outcomes.

To meet this requirement, courses must satisfy two of the following criteria:

- Examine the ways that social group differences are defined and expressed through cultural forms;
- Develop an understanding of the built and natural worlds, the differences in resources and resource use, and the varying ways that humans affect local and global environments;
- Study the dynamics or implications of group differences in power between or within society;
- Examine the formation, maintenance of, and struggles over social hierarchies.

The aim of International Perspectives (IP) is:

to assist students in gaining a critical understanding of the world outside of the United States, *both contemporary and historical* [emphasis in original]. In particular, such courses should meet at least two of the following criteria, while challenging students to become aware of the limits that ethnocentrism imposes on understanding societies different from their own:

- Enable students to engage in depth with the ideas, perspectives, and experiences which shape a society or cultural tradition;
- Examine the diversity of cultural perspectives that exist within localities, regions, and societies;
- Explore the processes that shape an interdependent and interconnected world;
- Examine contemporary or historical issues and trends that pertain to multiple societies.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹Ibid., 7.

ESD and IP are essentially a two-part “diversity” requirement that together elevate “diversity” to coordinate status with science, mathematics, and art. This is explicit in the CEP’s explanations, which were soon adopted as Bowdoin’s official rationale for its decision to settle on these particular requirements.

The packaging of the requirements, however, was a bit complicated. ESD and IP were meant to promote the ideology of “diversity,” but that ideology had no explicit role in defining a Bowdoin education. This gap apparently troubled some members of the Bowdoin faculty. After the faculty debate on the first draft of the new requirements, the CEP set to work to invent an educational mandate for which ESD and IP could be the solution. To give the new mandate legitimacy, the CEP had to find some way to connect it with the older purposes of the college. It did so by claiming that the new idea of diversity was the latest flowering of Bowdoin’s oldest idea, “the common good.”

The CEP report concluded by asking, “How does the statement of goals of liberal education relate to the distribution requirements?” and answering:

The Goals statement has been revised in response to many useful suggestions and with the goal of making it more consistent with the evolving set of distribution requirements. In particular, a statement on the “Common Good” provides a clear rationale for the International Perspectives and Exploring Social Differences requirements.¹²¹

When the CEP put forward its February 2004 draft revisions in the distribution requirements, it made them part of a larger report that included a section titled “Restating the Faculty’s Aspiration for a Liberal Education.” After the faculty debate over the proposed distribution requirements, the CEP revised this section adding (on March 31) a paragraph extolling the importance of teaching “diversity”:

Since its opening in 1802, Bowdoin has understood the obligation to direct liberal education toward the common good. In the twenty-first century, that obligation is stronger than ever. The challenge of defining a “common good” and acting on it is highlighted, however, in an interconnected world of widely varied cultures, interests, resources, and power. To prepare students for this complexity, a liberal education must teach about differences across cultures and within societies. At the same time, it should help students understand and respect the values and implications of a shared natural world and human heritage. By doing so, a liberal education will challenge students to appreciate and contend with diversity and the conflicts inherent in differing experiences, perspectives,

¹²⁰“Report of the CEP and Motions for Action,” Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee, Bowdoin College, March 31, 2004, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹²¹Ibid.

and values at the same time that they find ways to contribute to the common project of living together in the world.¹²²

This paragraph became part of “A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College,”¹²³ an official declaration included in the *Bowdoin College Catalogue*.

The 2004 distribution requirements still stand.¹²⁴ The 1983 requirements they replaced were somewhat simpler and more closely resembled the current “division” requirements. They were “Natural Science and Mathematics,” “Social and Behavioral Sciences,” “Humanities and Fine Arts,” and “Foreign Studies.” As we describe in the history Preface, “Foreign Studies” was a problematic category for Bowdoin and was renamed in 1987 to “Non-Eurocentric Studies.”

Under the heading “International Perspectives,” the 2004 distribution requirements re-admit Europe to the realm of topics from which it had been explicitly excluded under the requirements labeled “Foreign Studies” and subsequently “Non-Eurocentric Studies.” The concept of the humanities remained salient in the 1983 requirements; in 2004 it disappears, submerged in the two diversity requirements.¹²⁵ In 1983, the study of foreign languages was one of the options that could meet the “Humanities and Fine Arts” requirement (but not the “Foreign Studies” requirement). In the 2004 requirements, basic courses designed to teach foreign languages do not meet any of the distribution requirements.¹²⁶

Analysis

Distribution requirements are by nature a very weak form of general education requirement. They stand in contrast to stronger forms such as core curricula (where all students must complete the same set of general education requirements) and “cluster” requirements that provide solely for a narrow set of options. At Bowdoin a student can fulfill the five-course distribution obligation by choosing, for each of the five, among dozens (sometimes hundreds) of courses.

Bowdoin for a long stretch of its history had a curriculum without electives, and for another long stretch, a curriculum with more electives combined with plentiful requirements. From 1970 to 1983, Bowdoin had no general education requirements. The “no requirement” arrangement proved unsatisfactory, and in 1983 Bowdoin adopted a weak and by all accounts poorly thought-out set of distribution requirements. Although it lasted twenty years, this system

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³“A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College,” *Bowdoin College Catalogue*, 2011-2012, 15, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/courses/catalog/pdf-09-10/09-liberal-education.pdf>.

¹²⁴They still stand, but in the summers of 2010, 2011, and 2012 a faculty working group was examining the success of the 2004 distribution requirements and was preparing a report for the CEP that reportedly calls for further modifications in these requirements.

¹²⁵The humanities are not mentioned as such in the 2004 distribution requirements, though some humanities courses are included among those that qualify as meeting the 2004 distribution requirements. The division requirements still include a humanities requirement.

¹²⁶Some upper level courses in the foreign language departments meet the International Perspectives or Exploring Social Differences requirements, but these are courses that require the student to have already achieved fluency. For example, FRENCH208, “Contemporary France through the Media,” meets both requirements, though a student would be able to use it for only one or the other.

was perennially criticized by faculty members and eventually (in 1996) by Bowdoin’s main accreditor, and the college set out in 1997 to improve on it. The 2004 distribution requirements were the culmination of a seven-year institutional effort to devise a better framework, and Bowdoin has stuck with them until now—an effort is currently underway to revise them again.

The pace of Bowdoin’s willingness to revisit the basic requirements that define a “liberal arts education” has accelerated in recent decades. That’s because of a certain kind of intellectual entropy noted by a variety of observers within and outside the college. With no underlying agreement on what the liberal arts really *are*, Bowdoin is destined to continue for the foreseeable future to discuss, modify, redefine, update, and rearrange its superficial substitutes for a coherent liberal arts education. Bowdoin is not unaware of the problem, but is seemingly powerless to solve it.

In the early 1990s, for example, the college historian Charles Calhoun observed that at Bowdoin, “There is no longer any consensus as to what a student needs to know to be liberally educated.”¹²⁷ In 2004, the CEP, quoted above, reflected on Bowdoin’s “lack of clarity” about educational goals and the absence of even “a modest commitment” to general education.

After the 1970 reform by President Howell, Bowdoin lacked faculty consensus about the content of a liberal education. Howell’s idea was that a liberal education was no more than whatever an individual student chose to make of it. Among the ensuing effects of this was to cut the various academic departments free from the common enterprise of liberal education. They were more or less directed to go their own ways. Combined with the shift that had begun under President Coles toward greater faculty specialization and an emphasis on scholarly research and publication, these factors drove the faculty still further away from a shared vision of liberal education.

Attempts by Howell’s successors to reestablish some form of shared commitment to liberal arts education at Bowdoin proved anemic. Some twenty-six years after Howell had dismantled the older ideals, Bowdoin’s main accreditor observed (as paraphrased by the dean for academic affairs):

There was a sense that the Faculty continues to operate as a “confederation of independent duchies” and that it suffers from “governance schizophrenia

and

There was some concern that the Faculty assumes too little responsibility at the institutional level.¹²⁸

¹²⁷Charles C. Calhoun, *A Small College in Maine: Two Hundred Years of Bowdoin* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 1993), 262.

¹²⁸Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, November 4, 1996, November 1994–present (incomplete coverage), catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

Despite the 2004 revision of the distribution requirements and the current attempt to solve this problem, it's clear that Bowdoin still lacks any kind of agreement about educational principles that would enable it to come to a consensus about what *specific* knowledge every Bowdoin student should acquire by graduation. To reach such an agreement would require the faculty to assent that some subjects, some topics, and some approaches are more important than others. Doing so would stand in the way of three things that currently loom large at Bowdoin:

- the opportunity of faculty members to teach courses that draw on and emphasize their own areas of specialization
- the autonomy of students to “explore” the curriculum guided mostly by their own interests and intuition
- the independence of academic departments to set their own priorities

To say that Bowdoin's current distribution requirements are a very weak version of general education is not to say that those requirements don't matter. Distribution requirements are the strongest representation of the ideal of general education to which Bowdoin currently subscribes, and they set the college's main example of how knowledge is organized and what every student, at a bare minimum, should know. Thus, it is important to weigh what is required and what is conspicuously absent. Bowdoin's distribution requirements reflect the political and ideological affinities of Bowdoin's faculty and administration. They are an example of how personal beliefs can powerfully influence the content of the curriculum. This is true in two ways. The distribution requirements themselves enunciate a vision of what kinds of knowledge are deemed important. And the distribution requirements license and encourage the faculty to bend their teaching in an ideological direction.

Our study originated in a dispute over whether the predominantly left-of-center views of Bowdoin's faculty materially affect the content and quality of the education the college provides. The distribution requirements are one of the areas where the evidence points strongly to such an influence. Two of the five requirements—“Exploring Social Differences” and “International Perspectives”—are closely connected to views on the political left.

When Bowdoin adopted the 2004 version of its distribution requirements, it took care to provide a fuller rationalization for them than had been the case in previous iterations. In the new redaction the requirements were linked to a programmatic commitment to the ideal of “diversity,” which was in turn given a prominent place in the new statement, “A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College.” *Diversity* serves an interesting function in the search for an underlying principle to give “coherence” to the requirements and cohesion to the larger curriculum. It gives warrant for politicization while freeing faculty members, departments, and students to go their own ways. In effect, the elevation of diversity to the level of governing principle institutionalizes the incoherence that it ostensibly corrects. As far as divergent departmental interests go, it is an agree-to-disagree arrangement that demands very little of anyone other than deference to one of the shibboleths of the Left.

But the need to accommodate the divergent interests of the departments is only part of the story. At the level of the rationale behind the requirements, Bowdoin has committed to ideas and rhetoric that, far from being rooted in the broader liberal arts tradition, assert the primary importance of themes that embody the preoccupations of the American political Left: race, gender, class, cultural difference, and identity groups, how these phenomena are embedded in hierarchies and structures of power and how they connect to environmental concerns. All of these are, to be sure, legitimate topics for academic inquiry. But why are two of only five distribution requirements that Bowdoin maintains variations on the theme of “diversity”? Bowdoin’s explicit answer is that these two requirements are today’s realization of the college’s long commitment to the common good.

Later in this report, we return to that term, borrowed from Joseph McKeen’s 1802 inaugural address. Here it is enough to say that the historical warrant for using the language of a Congregationalist minister in the early republic to justify instructional standards focused on “social group differences,” “group differences in power,” “struggles over social hierarchies,” “diversity of cultural perspectives,” and the like is thin.

Bowdoin’s selection of “Exploring Social Differences” and “International Perspectives” as two of the five distribution requirements leaves aside many other possibilities that have often been key to the liberal arts. In elevating ESD and IP Bowdoin has tacitly decided *against* such organizing themes as:

Progress	Freedom and Tyranny	Human Nature
Civilization	Individuals and Society	Humanity and God
Nations and Community	The Transcendentals	Obligation and Debt
Truth and Justice	Discord and Harmony	Time and Mortality
Athens and Jerusalem	Virtue and Vice	Enlightenment and Ignorance

We mention such rubrics not to press the case for any one or all of them but to highlight the many possibilities that have been set aside—judging from college records—without even the benefit of debate. In this light, Bowdoin’s distribution requirements seem narrow as well as superficial.

For the humanities and social sciences, Bowdoin also implicitly rejected another version of distribution requirements: the old idea of requiring students to take courses in a specified range of disciplines. Bowdoin, for example, does not require a student to take any courses in English, philosophy, foreign languages, European history, American history, world history, government, religion, psychology, or sociology. Most students probably do touch bases in at least several of these disciplines, but it is telling that a student could, if he chose to, graduate from Bowdoin without taking a course in any of them.

To repeat, Bowdoin has periodically recognized this as a problem but flinched from enacting a solution. The faculty discussions leading to the 2004 reforms included many

observations on the need for more substantive requirements, but few Bowdoin professors were willing to countenance requiring particulars such as study of a foreign language. The CEP's most pointed 2004 finding was the lack, under the previous requirements (1983), of any compulsion to study math, science, the arts, and first year seminar:

20% or more of our students never take a course that demands they deal in a significant way with quantitative information; about 25% of the students are never exposed to the arts while at the College; one-fifth of our students never enroll in a course in the natural sciences; and nearly 10% do not enroll in a first year seminar.¹²⁹

We have no record of what percentage of the students similarly navigated themselves away from American history, English literature, and so on.

Can a Bowdoin student graduate having no course work on the Renaissance? The Enlightenment? The American Founding? The Industrial Revolution? Capitalism? The rise of liberal democracy? *Easily*. How many do graduate with little or no systematic intellectual preparation in these areas? We do not know.

The quality of individual courses that meet the requirements for ESD and IP vary widely, but because a course is assigned to either rubric does not necessarily mean its content is compromised by political ideology. Many are plainly not. What has been compromised is the overall design of the curriculum, which now emphasizes the themes and preoccupations of one side of the political spectrum and treats the themes and preoccupations of the other side as undeserving of mention, let alone emphasis.

This is not to say that the best answer would be sedulous attempts to balance the curriculum theme by theme, course by course, but Bowdoin students are immersed in a curriculum that gives them at best a one-sided understanding of key concepts and issues.

Bowdoin's distribution requirements also scant the notion that intellectual "breadth" should include acquiring facility with the main ideas, persons, and events that most educated people know: what has become known, following E.D. Hirsch's book of that title, as "cultural literacy."¹³⁰ The cultural literacy of graduates of elite liberal arts colleges has, of course, been eroded by the fragmentation of the curricula, but there remains a body of knowledge that most liberally educated people claim as a common inheritance. Bowdoin, like so many other colleges today, places little value on this inheritance; it is unevenly represented in course offerings and the college offers no map to find it.

We have emphasized Bowdoin's elevation of "diversity" as a guiding principle behind its distribution requirements, but it is important to add that the college recognizes other high-minded

¹²⁹"Report of the CEP and Motions for Action," Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee, Bowdoin College, March 31, 2004, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹³⁰E.D. Hirsch Jr., *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

educational goals. These are presented in “A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College,” and include:

the capacity of graduates to be informed and critically analytic readers of texts, evidence, and conclusions; to be able to construct a logical argument; to communicate in writing and speaking with clarity and self-confidence; to understand the nature of artistic creation and the character of critical aesthetic judgment; to have the capacity to use quantitative and graphical presentations of information critically and confidently; and to access, evaluate, and make effective use of information resources in varied forms and media.

The college also hopes that graduates are able

to engage competing views critically, to make principled judgments that inform their practice, and to work effectively with others as informed citizens committed to constructing a just and sustainable world.

And Bowdoin extols liberal arts education as something that:

cultivates the mind and the imagination; encourages seeking after truth, meaning, and beauty; awakens an appreciation of past traditions and present challenges; fosters joy in learning and sharing that learning with others; supports taking the intellectual risks required to explore the unknown, test new ideas, and enter into constructive debate; and builds the foundation for making principled judgments.¹³¹

These indeed seem to be praiseworthy goals, but their embodiment in Bowdoin’s academic requirements is rather sketchy

Division Requirements

Bowdoin retains a system of Division Requirements, but they seem vestigial. Every course at Bowdoin matches one of the three divisions: Natural Science and Mathematics, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Humanities. Students must take one course in each division. Meeting the division requirements is easy and nearly automatic if the student fulfills the distribution requirements.

Majors and Minors

The major and the minor are intended to provide the Bowdoin student with the experience of intellectual “depth.” To that end they are the most tightly constrained part of a Bowdoin education. Each department sets its own standards for a major, including its standards for departmental honors. Students are required to have a major; minors are optional.

Choosing a Major: Bowdoin students must declare a major in their fourth semester. “The Curriculum” states that “the major program challenges students to develop a deeper

¹³¹“A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College,” *Bowdoin College Catalogue*, 2011-2012, 15, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/courses/catalog/pdf-09-10/09-liberal-education.pdf>.

understanding and self-assurance as independent and creative contributors to an area of study” while engaging in “a discipline in depth.”¹³² To satisfy the major requirement, students may choose one of six options:

- departmental major
- double major
- coordinate major
- interdisciplinary major
- student-designed major
- any of the above with a departmental minor¹³³

Figure 34: Bowdoin Majors: 2011–2012

Africana Studies	Earth and Oceanographic Science	Latin American Studies
Anthropology	Economics	Mathematics
Art History ¹³⁴	English	Music
Asian Studies	Environmental Studies ¹³⁶	Neuroscience
Biochemistry	French	Philosophy
Biology	Gender and Women’s Studies	Physics
Chemistry	German	Psychology
Classical Archaeology	Government and Legal Studies	Romance Languages
Classical Studies	History	Russian
Classics ¹³⁵		Sociology
Computer Science		Spanish

Though the requirements for the major are set department by department, mostly they amount to about ten courses (of the thirty-two courses required for graduation). Major requirements usually include a core of about ten specific courses and the rest chosen from the department’s electives.¹³⁷ A few departments require a much higher number of courses. Neuroscience and chemistry, for example, each require thirteen courses—40 percent of the thirty-two courses required for graduation. The Bowdoin minor has a similar structure but fewer requirements. A

¹³²*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2011–2012*, 16.

¹³³*Ibid.*

¹³⁴Art history and visual arts program majors are offered by the art department.

¹³⁵Classical archaeology, classical studies, and classics program majors are offered by the classics department.

¹³⁶Environmental studies is Bowdoin’s lone coordinate major, a format that will be further explained below.

¹³⁷The major in Africana studies requires nine courses. Classics and history each require ten. Biology requires eight. Music requires ten courses plus two semesters of “performance credits,” e.g., lessons on a particular musical instrument.

minor typically requires about five courses.¹³⁸ Both majors and minors typically have requirements beyond a mere number of courses.

For example, the history department divides the history curriculum into six “fields of study” and specifies that the major cannot count more than six courses in any one of them. History majors are required to take two low-level history courses before the junior year, one “pre-modern” course, at least three non-lecture courses in at least two different fields of study at the intermediate to advanced levels, and at least four courses on topics outside the U.S. and Europe. They must also complete an advanced capstone course.¹³⁹

Note that one of history’s “fields of study” is the United States. Thus all history majors have the *option* of taking courses on U.S. history, but are *required* to take four courses on regions outside the U.S. and Europe.

The biology department requires majors to complete one of the more advanced introductory biology courses (Biology 102 or 109) and three of twelve core courses. It divides core courses into three groups:

One course must be taken from each group. Majors are also required to complete four elective courses, at least two of which have to be [advanced intermediate courses or higher].¹⁴⁰

Biology majors must also complete an intermediate mathematics course and specified courses in physics and chemistry.

The Africana studies department requires majors to take three core courses, five courses from one of the two specialized tracks (African American studies; Africa and the African diaspora), and one course from the other specialized track. Five of these six courses must be at the intermediate level or above.¹⁴¹

The Bowdoin major in 2011–2012, like many other aspects of the curriculum, has changed in character since our focal comparison year, 1964. At that time, the major was specified by the college as six courses. The expansion of the major from six to ten courses (for most departments) and the change from the college to each department determining the number of courses are other instances of Bowdoin’s shift from a unified conception of the liberal arts manifested in a balance between general education and specialization to the contemporary fragmentation of the curriculum and emphasis on departmental autonomy.

¹³⁸The minors in Africana studies, dance, theater, gay and lesbian studies, Latin, Greek, classics, and history each require five courses. The minor in biology requires four courses. The minors in archaeology and music require six courses.

¹³⁹*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2011–2012*, 180.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 40.

The aggrandizement of the Bowdoin major didn't happen all at once. By 1984, the major had grown from six to eight courses for most departments, with a few outliers such as the visual arts, which required eleven courses. Chemistry had arrived at its still extant thirteen-course requirement. Neuroscience required eleven courses; it currently requires thirteen. The music major grew from six courses in 1964, to nine in 1973, to ten in 1984, to eleven in 1989, and to twelve by 1998, where it remains. In 1998, some departmental majors stood at eight or nine courses, but others such as women's studies, sociology, chemistry, and English had steamed ahead to ten.

Since 1970, in the absence of any meaningful control by the college, majors have ballooned in the number of required courses. In a few cases such as chemistry and neuroscience, today's majors must take more than twice the number of courses required of their 1964 counterpart. Paradoxically, by emphasizing student autonomy at the expense of general education requirements and leaving the departmental major the only remaining element of curricular structure, Bowdoin ushered in the age of the hegemonic major: departments that demanded the major to take a third or more of all their courses to meet major requirements.

Bowdoin students today are frequently told they have myriad choices, and this is true in the sense that the number of courses offered is large (quadruple the number offered in 1964), the variety of majors has increased, the options for self-study and inventing a major has been made available, and the variety of courses within most majors has expanded. But this expansion of choice is somewhat illusory, because the major corrals most Bowdoin students to a particular pasture for concentrated grazing.

In its programmatic statements Bowdoin emphasizes that the major and the distribution requirements are meant to balance one another to ensure that the student experiences both intellectual depth and breadth. As discussed, the distribution requirements are very weak, but the major is stronger than ever in determining how much of a subject a student will study. The result is a curriculum that scants general education and emphasizes specialization.

In 1964 the Bowdoin minor was a requirement coordinate with the major. Students were required to have a minor, which was "planned with and approved by his major department."¹⁴² The minor today is optional—and planned and executed by the student with no necessary advice or approval of his major department. Minors add a small element of structure to the Bowdoin curriculum because the student who chooses to pursue one submits to a handful of additional requirements. These requirements are not very demanding. For example, a minor in chemistry consists of "four chemistry courses at or above the 200 level." A minor in environmental studies consists of five courses, some specified, some not. A minor in English consists of five courses, at least three of which are at the 200 level or higher.¹⁴³

¹⁴²*Bowdoin College Bulletin 1964–1965*, 75.

¹⁴³*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2011–2012*, 79, 127, 116.

Figure 35: Bowdoin Minors: 2011–2012

Africana Studies	Economics and Finance	Mathematics
Anthropology	Education Studies	Music
Archaeology	English	Philosophy
Art History	Environmental Studies	Physics
Asian Studies	Film Studies	Psychology
Biology	French	Religion
Chemistry	Gay and Lesbian Studies	Russian
Classical Studies	Gender and Women's Studies	Sociology
Classics	German	Spanish
Computer Science	Government and Legal Studies	Teaching
Dance	Greek	Theater
Earth and Oceanographic Science	History	Visual Arts
Economics	Italian	Latin
		Latin American Studies

Bowdoin has several other programs that do not offer majors or minors, including Arctic studies, coastal studies, architectural studies, engineering, and legal studies.

Bowdoin also provides several other arrangements that bear on the organization of courses students may take on their way to graduation. These are the “coordinate major,” interdisciplinary majors and minors, and student-designed majors.

Bowdoin has only one “coordinate major”: environmental studies. It is called a coordinate major because the student who pursues it must also pursue one of the other majors.

Interdisciplinary majors are the college’s prearranged conjunctions of subjects. Bowdoin has eight: art history and archaeology, art history and visual arts, chemical physics, computer science and mathematics, English and theater, Eurasian and East European studies, Earth and oceanographic science and physics, and mathematics and economics. The requirements of the interdisciplinary majors are similar in structure to the other majors. If a student is not satisfied with these eight options, he can propose his own interdisciplinary major “by consulting with the chairs of the two major departments.”¹⁴⁴

Several of Bowdoin’s majors and minors are interdisciplinary in character though Bowdoin has fixed them within their own departments or programs. These can be divided between fields such as biochemistry and neuroscience that fuse two disciplines and draw faculty members from only those disciplines,¹⁴⁵ and fields such as Africana studies and environmental studies that center on a topic and do not build on a traditional disciplinary base and draw faculty

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵With one exception: Mary Lou Zeeman in neuroscience has an appointment in mathematics.

members from diverse areas. Environmental studies, for example, draws faculty members from the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts.

Interdisciplinary programs are generally built of a combination of faculty members whose primary appointments are in another department and some faculty members whose primary appointment is in the interdisciplinary program itself. Only one interdisciplinary program, the gay and lesbian studies program, is made up entirely of faculty members whose primary appointments are in other departments.

Students at Bowdoin have the option to build their own majors under the guidance of two faculty members. In principle, such majors need to draw on significant elements from two or more departments and must be approved by the Curriculum Implementation Committee.

Analysis

A “major” or “minor” evokes the idea of in-depth study but not always a sequence of courses designed by the faculty to lead the student step-by-step from elementary to advanced study. As seen in the section on pedagogical approaches, Bowdoin has expanded the curriculum (the 2011–2012 *Bowdoin College Catalogue* lists 1,225 courses) while flattening out the hierarchy. Of Bowdoin’s thirty-three departments and programs only eight offer survey courses. And of the twenty-one survey courses in those eight departments, only six are part of two-semester sequences. Introductory courses, which focus on preparation in one particular part of a field rather than surveying the field as whole, are relatively common.

The largest change we noticed from our comparison with Bowdoin in 1964, however, was the rise of “topics” courses. Less than 2 percent of the courses in 1964 fit this category. In fall 2011, almost one-third of the courses focused on topics, and in spring 2012 the figure was 27 percent. Topics courses, in contrast to what we call “intermediate” courses, do not focus on systematically building the student’s knowledge of a field or discipline, but hone in on a highly specific and often specialized topic within the discipline. Topics courses, like intermediate courses, usually have prerequisites. They build on the student’s growing competence in that sense, but they are structured more like annexes than additional stories. And because they provide a significant part of the inventory of courses from which a student majoring in a subject must choose his curriculum, the topics courses shape the kind of “depth” a Bowdoin major offers. They contribute to the major what might be called the archipelago-of-knowledge quality. The student, having mastered the basics and some of the intermediates, comes into possession of an assortment of small-scale specializations.

Such topics courses make an undergraduate major a bit less like the traditional idea of a liberal arts education and a bit more like a foretaste of graduate school. Bowdoin’s expansion over the decades of the number of courses required for a major likewise turns the student toward specialization at the expense of breadth. In light of the imbalance of major requirements and general education requirements, Bowdoin’s undergraduate education today is more of a prelude to advanced study than a well-considered preparation for life.

The First-Year Seminar

First-Year Seminars are a key requirement for Bowdoin students. They are similar in design and character to freshman seminars at many liberal arts colleges and some universities. The basic idea is to put students into small seminars focused on a relatively advanced topic but taught at a level that doesn't require subject expertise beyond what a student has attained in high school. Such courses are meant to hone the student's ability to write thematic essays, but they differ from freshman composition courses in several ways. Typically, a college offers an abundance of seminars on diverse topics rather than a single standardized course. They are usually taught by faculty members from across the departments rather than by the English department or a dedicated composition faculty, and they generally serve as glimpses of the intellectual content of disciplines that the student has not yet encountered. As presented in the *Faculty Handbook*, Bowdoin's rationale for its first-year seminars follows this widespread approach almost exactly.¹⁴⁶

Bowdoin began offering first-year seminars some time before 1980, but they were initially optional—and called Freshman Seminars.¹⁴⁷ They became mandatory in 2005, and the class of 2009 was the first that had to complete a first-year seminar to fulfill a degree requirement.¹⁴⁸ The first-year seminar is now conceived as a program with its own director. David Hecht, assistant professor of history, was program director in 2011–2012. He has been succeeded by an acting director, Hillary Thompson, assistant professor of English. Though the first-year seminar draws on many departments and academic programs, the great majority of the courses fall under the humanities division.¹⁴⁹

The 2011–2012 *Bowdoin Catalogue* listed seventy-five first-year seminars, twenty-five of which were bracketed to indicate that while they had been offered the previous two semesters, they were not definitely scheduled for future offering. The actual course offerings in fall 2011 included thirty-two first-year seminars. First-year seminars are also offered in the spring for students who missed them in the fall, but this is typically a small number. In spring 2012, Bowdoin offered four first-year seminars. In fall 2012, the college initially offered thirty-five first-year seminars; it appears that two of these were cancelled.

¹⁴⁶“The First-Year Seminar program is designed to help introduce students to what it means to undertake serious intellectual work at the college level. The seminars provide small class settings where students can engage with a particular topic, a professor, and their peers. They provide an opportunity for in-depth study of a subject of mutual interest, as well as a place to develop college level skills of critical thinking, both reading and writing. The development of such skills is a central feature of first-year seminars. Approaches to this vary, as do the norms of academic writing being taught. All first-year seminars, however, involve frequent writing practice, individualized feedback on writing, and an assignment structure that teaches students how to draft and revise. Additionally, the seminars provide both an introduction to library research and an overview of the expectations of academic honesty and citing sources. This opportunity to learn and practice academic writing is both an independent goal of first-year seminars, and an additional means through which faculty can introduce their discipline and help students to engage with a particular subject matter.” *Faculty Handbook 2012–2013*, Bowdoin College, 53, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/forms-policies/policies/pdf/12-13FacultyHandbook.pdf>.

¹⁴⁷As far back as 1975, the English department offered a freshman seminar that appears ancestral to the current first-year seminar.

¹⁴⁸“First Year Seminars,” Bowdoin College, Academic Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/experience/first-year-seminars.shtml>.

¹⁴⁹“First Year Seminars – Courses,” Bowdoin College, The College Catalogue, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/catalogue/courses/first-year-seminars/courses.shtml>.

As mentioned, although first-year seminars come from many different academic departments, most are in the humanities division—twenty out of thirty-two (63 percent), for fall 2011. Nine came from the social and behavioral sciences (28 percent) and three were in the natural sciences (9 percent).

Figure 36: First-Year Seminars: Fall 2011, Spring 2012, Fall 2012

Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Fall 2012
Affirmative Action and U.S. Society	Racism	Affirmative Action and U.S. Society
Archaeology Rethinking the Past	Ghosts	Fictions of Freedom
Perspectives on Modern China	Comics and Culture	Racism
Venoms and Toxins	Transfigurations of Song	Music and Race in Latin America
Great Issues in Science		Africa
Discovering Homer		African American Children's
Living Downstream		Literature
The Art of the Deal		Art and the Environment:
The Educational Crusade		1960 to the Present
Shakespeare's Afterlives		Material Life in Early America
African American Writers		*Beyond Pocahontas:
Hawthorne		Native American Stereotypes
Modern American Poets		Great Issues in Science
Orphans of Asia		Ancient Democracy and Critics
Fan Fictions and Cult Classics		Understanding Theater and Dance
Animal Life		Living Downstream
My Old School		The Art of the Deal
Campus Architecture and Education		*Queer Gardens
Cultural Difference and Crime Film		Hawthorne
Representing Violence Against		Fan Fictions and Cult Classics
Women		The Real Life of Literature
The Pursuit of Peace		Fact and Fiction
The Korean War		Sexual Life of Colonialism
East Asian Politics		Modern Western Prostitutes
Citizenship and Representation		Women in the European Union
American Politics		Globalizing India
Exercises in Political Theory		Public Health in Europe and U.S.
Human Being and Citizen		The Pursuit of Peace
Memoirs and Memory in		The Korean War
American History		Global Media and Politics
Science and Society		Power and Participation in
Consumer Revolution/Atlantic		American Politics
World		Exercises in Political Theory
"Bad" Women Make Great History		Political Leadership
Personal Ethics		Human Being and Citizen
		Utopian Communities, 1630–1997
		Consumerism in Early-Modern
		Europe
		A Philosopher's Dozen
		Intro to the Brain and Behavior

		Fantasy and Satire: East Central Europe
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*Courses marked with an asterisk are listed in the “First-Year Seminar Request Form” but not included in the Registrar’s official list of Fall 2012 courses.

Some of these catch the eye as distinctly odd course offerings for college freshmen, or perhaps any undergraduate. “Sexual Life of Colonialism”? “Modern Western Prostitutes”? “Ghosts”? One first-year seminar offered in fall 2012, but struck from the list because too few students signed up for it, was “Queer Gardens,” a survey of the horticultural achievements of “gay and lesbian gardeners” and a rereading of literary works on gardens from a “queer” perspective.

The list of first-year seminars may look to some readers to be a random collection of courses. Indeed no principle unites them within the curriculum other than they all are designed to meet the rather vague definition of a first-year seminar.

Bowdoin offers clarity in several places: a brief definition on the Bowdoin website says the first-year seminar is a “keystone course” that “takes students to the heart of a discipline, developing their scholarship skills in small classes with faculty who are working in a specific topic area.”¹⁵⁰ An expanded definition in the *Faculty Handbook* emphasizes that the first-year seminar is “a place to develop college level skills of critical thinking, both reading and writing.” These are seminars where “the norms of academic writing” are taught coupled with “expectations of academic honesty.”¹⁵¹

Enrollment is limited to sixteen students. According to Cristle Collins Judd, dean for academic affairs, the first-year seminars help to identify students who are deficient in certain college-level skills.¹⁵² Bowdoin does not publicly admit that it offers remedial courses, but the college has several mechanisms aimed at helping students who do not thrive academically. For example, students with poor math skills, as determined by a “Quantitative Skills Assessment” test, are placed in a low-level course, MATH050, “Quantitative Reasoning.” Several first-year seminars are a vehicle for a remedial composition program, “The Writing Project,” directed by Kathleen O’Connor, lecturer in education, in which students “seeking to reinforce and improve their writing skills” can receive assistance from fellow undergraduates.¹⁵³ In fall 2012, Bowdoin offered twelve writing project courses, six of which were first-year seminars.

In 2009, the faculty Working Group on Academic Preparedness proposed that students who earn a C- or lower in a first-year seminar be required to take a second first-year seminar.

¹⁵⁰“The Curriculum,” Bowdoin College, Academics, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/curriculum/index.shtml>.

¹⁵¹*Faculty Handbook 2012–2013*, Bowdoin College, 53, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/forms-policies/policies/pdf/12-13FacultyHandbook.pdf>.

¹⁵²Erin K. McAuliffe, “Possible Changes to FY Seminars,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 19, 2010, <http://orient.bowdoin.edu/orient/article.php?date=2010-02-19§ion=1&id=4>.

¹⁵³“Pre-Major Academic Advising Tip Sheet for Advisors, 2012–2013,” Bowdoin College, Academic Affairs, Teaching and Advising, 3, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/curriculum-teaching/tipsheet.shtml>.

The CEP rejected this proposal on the grounds that “individual advising rather than a blanket policy may be more appropriate.”¹⁵⁴ Dean Judd, reporting on the CEP’s deliberations, noted, “Last year there were fewer than 10 students who received D’s or F’s in [First-Year Seminars].” Replying to Judd, associate professor of education Charles Dorn observed that, “if students are not succeeding in [First-Year Seminars], that means they will continue to struggle and there should be some sort of intervention” beyond a note to the students’ advisors.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, February 1, 2010, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

Chapter 3

Academic Instruction: Themes

Bowdoin's curriculum reflects some broader thematic concerns such as the lack of academic preparedness among a significant number of students. Bowdoin has also created six interdisciplinary "studies" programs that have important influence on the curriculum as a whole. In this chapter we examine this thematic organization.

Academic Preparedness

"It is also 'unquestionably true,' [President Mills] stated, that as a whole, students of all backgrounds come to Bowdoin with less preparation than did students in the past."

Faculty Minutes, October 1, 2001

"The single biggest complaint from college teachers and employers is that high school graduates cannot write as well as they need to." So says Marc Tucker, president of the National Council on Education and the Economy.¹⁵⁶ Tucker has plenty of support for this view, including faculty members at Bowdoin and its two most recent presidents, who have expressed worry that even the students at their elite college often fall considerably short in writing skills and other areas of basic academic competence.

Like other discussions, this debate about academic standards at Bowdoin is longstanding. In 1994, Bowdoin initiated a program to assist students with poor writing skills. This writing program became a touchstone in subsequent faculty discussions over student preparedness in both quantitative and qualitative areas. In 1996, after recognizing that 15 to 30 percent of students had quantitative skills "below a basic level," Bowdoin adopted a quantitative skills test required of all students during orientation. The December 11, 1997, minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty record a wide-ranging conversation on "teaching efforts across competing needs." At one point:

Dean Kaplan expressed concern that motivated students receive an exceptional education at Bowdoin, but that a large group of middle level students do not always reap the potential rewards available at the College. Thus, we need to address how to better reach such students.

Dean Steele [dean of admission] responded by recommending that all students be exposed early in their careers to the requisite learning skills. This approach could be used

¹⁵⁶Marc Tucker, "Instructional Technology: Villain of the Piece—or Savior?" *Education Week*, August 9, 2012, http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/top_performers/2012/08/.

to help close the growing gap between exceptional and middle level students observed by the Admissions Office.¹⁵⁷

In 2000, Kathleen O'Connor, director of the writing program, reported that "an effort is underway to examine the needs of students for whom English is a second language and create some ways to support them."¹⁵⁸

Later that year President Edwards extolled Bowdoin's success in enrolling more minority students while delicately alluding to the academic preparedness problem. As the faculty minutes recount:

President Edwards spoke enthusiastically about the class of 2004 and stressed the diversity of its provenance, ethnic, socio-economic, and geographical. The Chamberlain Scholar Program and the POSSE Foundation Program, new outreach strategies developed last year, have also helped to ensure a greater minority presence on campus, but students' academic preparation before matriculation at Bowdoin is by no means uniform.¹⁵⁹

The problem of underperformance among affirmative action recruits vexed other Bowdoin officials as well. Speaking to the Faculty on May 7, 2001, Craig McEwen, former dean for academic affairs,

observed that with increasing student diversity faculty members may face larger challenges in providing clear and meaningful feedback to students regarding the quality of their academic work. Yet providing this feedback is as important as ever. Students should not arrive at their junior or senior years without having acquired the basic academic skills required for success in advanced work; but the failure to send appropriate signals earlier removes an inducement for students to do so.¹⁶⁰

Eddie Glaude, assistant professor of religion and Africana studies,

noted his personal concern that too many students seem to be "passed along: by instructors who for a variety of reasons do not communicate effectively with weaker students about their academic needs. He was particularly concerned about African-American students but believed the issue to be broader. Faculty should realize how important it is to provide clear feedback early in a student's career; not to stigmatize

¹⁵⁷Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, December 11, 1997, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹⁵⁸Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, February 7, 2000, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹⁵⁹Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, September 11, 2000, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹⁶⁰Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 7, 2001, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

minority students, e.g., by relaxing standards or expecting less; and to work with students to identify the kinds of academic support that would be most helpful.¹⁶¹

In the discussion that followed, the faculty focused on how best to tackle the deficiencies in students' writing abilities. They wondered in particular whether the "first-year seminar program [is] a sufficient effort to teach basic writing," and "[d]oes the curriculum as we have it now include enough, and the right kind, of courses and other kinds of support needed by students with very poor academic skills? (For example, where do we teach students the basic elements of writing a good essay?)"¹⁶²

This discussion continued under Barry Mills, inaugurated that fall. In his second meeting as Bowdoin president with the faculty, he avowed (quoted above) that today's students "come to Bowdoin with less preparation than did students in the past."¹⁶³ In 2008, the college convened a Working Group on Academic Preparedness that issued a report in 2009. At an October 3, 2011, faculty meeting, Charles Dorn, associate professor of Education, described the impetus for the working group proposal as "being the groundswell of concern among the faculty and from Barry Mills about the diversity of student backgrounds and the need for the college to do more to support those coming to Bowdon less prepared than others."¹⁶⁴

Bowdoin is reluctant to draw attention to the special help that some of the minority students it admits need to succeed. This results in an uneasy compromise in which Bowdoin provides some of the necessary help but goes to great effort to keep the help at minimal visibility lest it stigmatize the students who need it.

Rather than further document this discussion at Bowdoin year by year, let's turn to the larger context. Bowdoin is by no means alone in its struggle with the problem of enrolled students who lack requisite skills. Low academic standards in secondary schools, even among many schools with strong academic reputations, mean that many students—even very bright students—reach college with skills well below the levels colleges once considered necessary for admission. Often the students themselves have little awareness of the problem. They have received good grades in high school, scored well on standardized tests, and received considerable praise for their talents and accomplishments. In many cases they lack a yardstick to measure their actual level of ability. This is especially manifest in their writing, which many of them assume is quite good, when in fact it falls far short of historical norms for college-level writing.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Mills spoke to the Faculty, October 1, 2001, on the relationship between diversity and academic unpreparedness. According to the minutes, "Providing context for the Discussion of Issues, President Mills noted that recent policy decisions at Bowdoin have resulted in a student body that is more diverse in economic background, race and ethnicity, geographic region, and schooling. It is also 'unquestionably true,' he stated, that as a whole, students of all backgrounds come to Bowdoin with less preparation than did students in the past."

¹⁶⁴Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, October 3, 2011, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹⁶⁵These problems have been documented and analyzed by a variety of scholars, some of whom have turned to the public forum. In *Losing Our Language: How Multicultural Classroom Instruction Is Undermining Our Children's Ability to Read, Write, and Reason* (Free Press, 1999),

The problem is further complicated by the commitment of many colleges to various forms of extra-academic preferences in admissions, including those based on race and ethnicity, and on athletic prowess. Another factor is the admission of increasing numbers of students, many from abroad, who do not speak English as a first language.

The result of all these factors together is that most colleges and universities find themselves with significant numbers of freshmen who arrive ill-equipped even for moderate levels of academic challenge, let alone a rigorous curriculum. Colleges have a battery of responses to these problems: remedial courses for the least academically talented and the poorest prepared; remanding some students to rush English as a Second Language training; slackening—subtle or otherwise—in the difficulty of courses and the extent of requirements; and grade inflation to disguise the typically disappointing results of the previous measures.

Such accommodation avoids confronting students with evidence of their academic shortfalls. Students are generally unaware that they have attained high grades and frequent praise without having achieved the level of skills that would have been taken as ordinary college preparedness in generations past. These are the ingredients for a difficult discussion that most colleges today are only willing to have behind closed doors.

Bowdoin pretty plainly faces all of these problems, though on the available data it is impossible to rank or scale them. In the faculty minutes, student “underpreparedness” is most emphatically linked with Bowdoin’s pursuit of racial diversity. This probably reflects a genuine gap in the level of academic performance of black students and members of other racially-defined segments of the student population, but is not something that we can document—and even if true may disguise a larger problem. “Majority” students may generally perform better than black students, but majority students may also be “underprepared” in significant ways. Indeed, that’s what the data nationwide attests, and there is small reason to think that Bowdoin is an exception.¹⁶⁶

The word “underprepared,” however, should not be left to stand without comment. It implies that students who do not perform well in Bowdoin courses find themselves in that position mainly, or perhaps exclusively, because they arrived without the right kinds of

Sandra Stotsky drew particular attention to the enfeeblement of writing instruction in K–12 education. Will Fitzhugh, who edits *The Concord Review*, a journal that showcases the best nonfiction essays of high school students, has published a series of reports documenting the decline of high school instruction on the writing of research papers, e.g., *History Research Paper Study* (November 2002), http://www.nas.org/images/documents/History_Paper.pdf. Some observers place more emphasis on popular culture than on defects in K–12 education as the deeper source of decline in compositional ability. See, for example, Mark Bauerlein, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future* (New York: Tarcher, 2008); and Terry Eagleton, the Marxist literary critic, who recently lamented the decline among students of “close analysis of language, responsiveness to literary form, a sense of moral seriousness,” in an interview in the June 4, 2012, *Oxonian Review*, <http://www.oxonianreview.org/wp/an-interview-with-terry-eagleton>. Eagleton blames rampant consumerism and “neo-managerialism.” Whether the critique is grounded in the views characteristic of the cultural Right or the cultural Left, there seems to be something like consensus that the problem is real.

¹⁶⁶See, for example, the study by the sociologists Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). Using the Collegiate Learning Assessment and the National Survey of Student Engagement, Arum and Roksa document a pattern that holds true even for elite colleges and universities of large percentages of students who underperform and show little measureable gain over four years of academic study.

secondary education. This may be the case for some students, but it neatly avoids mention of students who may be wanting in other ways, such as ability, ambition, and self-discipline. Again, we have no way of identifying the relative weight of these factors among Bowdoin students, but it's worth noting that Bowdoin itself seldom if ever even acknowledges any possibility other than shortfalls in "preparedness."

Academic Preparedness and the SATs

Bowdoin has been avoiding evidence of lack of academic talent among some of its applicants since 1969, the year that President Howell abolished the requirement that students submit SAT scores or evidence of performance on other standardized tests. We are fortunate, however, to have some unusually specific data on how Bowdoin's SAT-optional policy has worked. Howard Wainer, a statistician and formerly the principal research scientist at the Educational Testing Service, recently published a book in which he presents a body of testing data about Bowdoin's class of 1999. In *Uneducated Guesses: Using Evidence to Uncover Misguided Education Policies*, Wainer uses material seldom reported by colleges but which Bowdoin voluntarily disclosed as part of a study undertaken by the College Board.¹⁶⁷ Generally, what Wainer shows is that despite its SAT-optional policy, "between 70 percent and 84 percent of Bowdoin's applicant pool each year has submitted SAT scores, and moreover, about the same proportion of those who submitted SAT scores eventually attend Bowdoin."¹⁶⁸ The surprising data that Wainer has via the College Board are the SAT scores of the students who applied to Bowdoin but elected not to submit those scores. For the class of 1999, Wainer has the SAT scores of *all* 106 students who applied and were admitted without SAT scores.

Wainer found that these applicants who did not submit their scores generally had lower SAT scores than their counterparts who did submit their scores. They generally made the perfectly reasonable choice under Bowdoin's policies not to disclose the evidence of their relative intellectual weakness. That relative weakness, however, was no small thing: "The mean score of those who submitted them was 1323, while the mean score of those who did not was 1201, 122 points lower."¹⁶⁹ Wainer also has data on the academic performance of these students: "We see that the students who did not submit their SAT scores not only did about 120 points worse on the SAT but also received grades 0.2 grade points (on a four-point scale) worse in their first-year courses."¹⁷⁰

A mean score of 1201 on the SATs is, of course, not bad, but for the sake of comparison, a score of 1201 would put a student at the bottom of the entering class at all eight Ivy League schools, while a score of 1323 would put a student roughly in the lower third of entering classes

¹⁶⁷Howard Wainer, *Uneducated Guesses: Using Evidence to Uncover Misguided Education Policies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*

at schools such as Brown, Columbia, and Cornell. The 122 points gap, in other words, makes a real difference.¹⁷¹

Because these students did not report their SAT scores to Bowdoin, Bowdoin's official account of the mean SAT scores of its enrolled students leaves them out, which serves to make Bowdoin look more "selective" than it really is. In 1999, for instance, the submitted SAT score was 1323 but, if the non-submitters were included, it would have been 1288.¹⁷² As Wainer puts it, "This allows the school to game the *US News and World Report* rankings, which use mean SAT score as a component of the ranking system."¹⁷³ If the complete numbers were reported, Bowdoin's ranking would have been lower.

It is natural to wonder how much lower, but the opacity of *U.S. News & World Report's* ranking system make that hard to determine. What is clear is that Bowdoin's officially reported SAT scores make it appear more selective than quite a few highly selective colleges, including Bryn Mawr, Claremont McKenna, Hamilton, Macalester, Reed, and Vassar. When an adjustment is made to account for the SAT scores not included by Bowdoin in its official data, Bowdoin appears to drop below all of these schools on this particular measure of selectivity.¹⁷⁴

Wainer's evidence bears on the nature of the "underperformance" problem. It appears that Bowdoin systematically admits a significant number of students—between 16 and 30 percent of each class—who, judged by their SAT scores, are markedly less equipped than their classmates to meet the college's standards of academic performance. In that sense, "underprepared" at Bowdoin is a planned phenomenon. The college is perennially trying to solve a problem of its own making. And it is a problem that can only be solved at half-measure because Bowdoin's policy to admit underprepared students comes up against its policy to not *require* courses. Instead, it can only urge and recommend that students study particular subjects. The most significant drawback of this policy is in the absence of required composition courses. Bowdoin officially assumes its students can write well but the faculty and administration also knows from first-hand experience that some of them write below college level and many others are mediocre.

Analysis: First-Year Seminar

The First-Year Seminar is best seen in this light: it was an attempt by Bowdoin to ensure that matriculated students, by the end of their first year, reach the level of compositional skill that enables them to succeed in working through the rest of the curriculum.

This motive, however, has been somewhat mixed with and muddled by other motives, and the first-year seminars have fallen far short of their goal.

¹⁷¹Allen Grove, "SAT Scores for Ivy League Admissions: Side-by-Side Comparison of Ivy League Admissions Data," About.com, Education, College Admissions. http://collegeapps.about.com/od/sat/a/sat_side_x_side.htm.

¹⁷²Wainer, *Uneducated Guesses*, 16.

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴Grove, "SAT Scores."

While they constitute an important structural element in the Bowdoin curriculum, first-year seminars lie outside the main conceptualization of the curriculum as the interplay between depth and breadth. Their primary aim is functional. They are meant to ensure that students have sufficient writing skills to handle Bowdoin's many courses that require written exposition. They also aim to ensure that students read well enough to handle the kinds of texts they will encounter in their other courses.

First-year seminars, however, are not sold to the students on this basis, but are presented as gateways to the academic disciplines. Bowdoin explains via its website that the purpose of these seminars is, as quoted above, to take "students to the heart of a discipline," where they can develop "their scholarship skills." The *Catalogue* adds:

The purpose of the first-year seminar program is to introduce students to college-level disciplines and to lead students to understand the ways in which a specific discipline may relate to other areas in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Each seminar places an emphasis upon the improvement of students' skills—their ability to read texts effectively and to write prose that is carefully organized, concise, and firmly based upon evidence.¹⁷⁵

Both purposes play out. Students taking the seminars do get a glimpse of an academic discipline as well as training in basic academic skills. There may be, however, several other less acknowledged motives. Some departments, such as government and psychology, appear to use first-year seminars as an on-ramp to their other course offerings. Some courses bear titles that barely relate to the "college-level disciplines" they supposedly represent but may be calculated to pique the interest of late adolescents, e.g., "Fan Fictions and Cult Classics," "'Bad' Women Make Great History," and "Comics and Culture."¹⁷⁶

Because the pedagogical purpose of the first-year seminar is to teach students a higher level of writing, we have examined syllabi to discover how much writing these courses entail. A first-year seminar instructor told us that Bowdoin's guidelines for these seminars require each student to complete a minimum of twenty-five pages of writing. We have not been able to verify this, but the "Guidelines for First-Year Seminars" in the *Faculty Handbook* provide descriptions of the number (at least four) and types of writing assignments deemed appropriate but do not specify how many pages of writing a seminar should require.¹⁷⁷ Some of the first-year seminar syllabi specify fewer than twenty-five pages.

Among the first-year seminar syllabi we have examined—twenty-one of thirty-two for fall 2011—the writing component is generally modest. In "Animal Life," students are required to

¹⁷⁵*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2011–2012*, 36.

¹⁷⁶Where possible, we have examined the syllabi of these courses.

¹⁷⁷*Faculty Handbook 2009–2010*, Bowdoin College, 50, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/forms-policies/policies/pdf/09-10FacultyHandbook.pdf>. The "Guidelines" do not appear in the 2010–2011, 2011–2012, or 2012–2013 versions of the *Handbook*.

write “three essays ranging from 4 to 8 pages.” In “Sleeping with the Enemy: Representing Violence against Women,” students complete a series of brief writing assignments (one to two pages, one page, five pages, two pages, and five pages) culminating in a ten to fifteen-page paper. In “Affirmative Action in U.S. Society,” students are required to write four short (three to four-page) “analytical response papers based on course readings.” In “Racism,” students are required to write two two-page papers, a five-page paper, and a ten-page paper.¹⁷⁸

Judging by these syllabi, the burden of teaching writing in first-year seminars sits lightly on many of the instructors and the courses as a whole appear to be more about their various topics than about systematic instruction in the discipline of English composition.

Made mandatory (for students entering in 2005) as part of the CEP-initiated reforms in 2004, first-year seminars were seen as a way to “foster . . . intellectual capabilities.” This followed, as discussed, years of fretting by faculty that many Bowdoin students were falling short in the compositional skills required to complete college coursework. Bowdoin’s *2006 Self-Study*, conducted for its ten-year re-accreditation report, provides a detailed account of that fretting.¹⁷⁹

The elevation of the first-year seminar to a graduation requirement, however, did not solve the problem of “academic preparedness.” A five-year interim report to its accreditor, *The NEASC Fifth Year Report* (October 2011), contains an updated account of Bowdoin’s efforts to use the first-year seminars to raise up “the bottom 10% of the graduating class” and to help “struggling” students.¹⁸⁰

If the academic major represents Bowdoin’s attempt to offer students intellectual “depth” and the distribution requirements are a feint toward intellectual “breadth,” the first-year seminar is its gesture toward the ideal of college-level literacy. Various referred to at Bowdoin as

¹⁷⁸The quotations are taken from original unpublished documents.

¹⁷⁹See, “Standard Four: The Academic Program,” Bowdoin College, Academic Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/accreditation/s4.shtml>:

Writing pedagogy: An initiative on the teaching of writing was renewed in 2005–06 to encourage the rethinking of writing pedagogy. This initiative drew support from three studies of the teaching of writing at Bowdoin: a 2002 survey of faculty practices in teaching writing, in which half of the respondents indicated that they were not confident in their preparation for teaching writing; and two studies (one in 2001 and one in 2003) which inquired about student experiences in first-year seminars (e.g., numbers of papers required, total pages written, opportunity to submit revisions) and perceptions of them (e.g., aspects of writing emphasized in class, perception of improvement in writing over the course of the semester). In late Spring 2002, a group of thirty faculty met to discuss the first two of these studies, prompting initiatives to require first-year seminars and to monitor the teaching of writing in them, and suggesting faculty receptiveness to a larger initiative on writing.

¹⁸⁰See, Bowdoin College, *New England Association of Schools and Colleges Fifth Year Report* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College 2011), 6:

In 2008, a faculty working group on academic preparedness undertook a systematic analysis of transcripts of the bottom 10% of the graduating class to see if there were common places in the curriculum in which students began to do poorly. The goal was to identify points in the students’ careers at Bowdoin in which an intervention might insure [sic] that students received the support necessary for success. The working group identified the first-year seminar as a crucial opportunity for addressing concerns. In response to the recommendations of the working group, the Committee on Curriculum and Educational Policy increased the number of first-year seminars offered in the fall semester (beginning in Fall 2010) so that every first-year student could take a first-year seminar in the fall (and not wait until the spring simply because there was not enough room for him/her). This also allowed more first-year students the opportunity to take a second first-year seminar in the spring. Further, first-year seminar instructors are now asked to contact the advisors of any first year students who are struggling before registration for the next semester occurs so that these students can be advised to take courses that will help them continue to develop their writing and reading skills (e.g., English 60, History 60, an additional first-year seminar).

“scholarship skills” and “academic preparedness,” this level of literacy is a vague and sometimes contradictory goal. And that is also true of the goals of depth and breadth. The “depth” aimed at in the academic major is checked by Bowdoin’s overriding emphasis on students choice of their own curricular paths. The “breadth” is satisfied with a mere five courses out of thirty-two. And the “scholarship skills” Bowdoin hopes to cultivate are introduced in a single, often not very demanding course, and buffered with trendy topicality. Bowdoin’s faculty has, in effect, declined to teach freshman English or uphold any other mechanism that would set a threshold of literacy among Bowdoin students.

Some of the first-year seminars seem like worthy undertakings. “Affirmative Action and U.S. Society,” “Discovering Homer,” “The Korean War,” and “Public Health in the U.S. and Europe” sound like courses that address important topics in a responsible way. They might also be reasonably good platforms to teach expository writing. But as the college’s *only* requirement aimed at ensuring that students have the skills to engage with an intellectually demanding curriculum, the first-year seminar falls considerably short of what is needed.

“Studies” Programs

Gender and women’s studies, Africana studies, gay and lesbian studies, Asian studies, Latin American studies, and environmental studies at Bowdoin occupy a distinct place in the curriculum and in Bowdoin’s overall academic organization. One way to speak of this difference is to follow Bowdoin’s lead and call the programs “interdisciplinary.” But this term poses some problems. For one thing, Bowdoin has other departments and programs such as neuroscience and biochemistry that are interdisciplinary in quite a different way. Thus, “interdisciplinary” doesn’t really name what sets the six studies programs apart.

They actually stand apart because they are the only programs (or departments) at Bowdoin that were founded to advance political goals. We mean by this that these programs were created for the primary purpose of changing our society. Though calling themselves “studies,” their characteristic stance was at their founding and still today the promotion of a settled set of propositions disapproving of the way things are, accounting for why they are so bad, and promoting alternatives. What gets “studied” in the studies programs is how to implement political reform to move an agenda established in advance of any open-minded form of intellectual inquiry.

Bowdoin sometimes attests to the political origins of its studies departments, as in its *Catalogue* statement that, “The Africana Studies Program at Bowdoin College, like many others in the country, grew out of the African American freedom movement of the 1960s.”¹⁸¹ We will look at the political origins and current politics of the other five studies programs and return to Africana studies.

¹⁸¹*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2011–2012*, 40.

A. **Gender and Women's Studies:** Founded as a "Women's Studies" minor in 1988, this program was from the start driven by a political goal, to promote "gender as a category of analysis" in the "arts, humanities, and natural and social sciences."¹⁸² One of its first two courses, "Feminist Theory," set out to "consider analyses from diverse perspectives such as radical feminism, French feminism and post-structuralism, and Marxist feminism."¹⁸³ In short, women's studies began at Bowdoin not as the academic study of women but as the promotion of feminism. It remains so. As both the *Bowdoin College Catalogue* and the current gender and women's studies website put it:

Courses in gender and women's studies investigate the experience of women and men in light of the social construction of gender and its meaning across cultures and historic periods. Gender construction is explored as an institutionalized means of structuring inequality and dominance.¹⁸⁴

The program simply assumes that gender is entirely constructed by society without any input from nature and that societies construct the female gender for one purpose: to subjugate women. These claims are not put forward as hypotheses to investigate but as settled propositions that form the basis of further course work. Such political foundations necessarily have direct policy implications. They assign to responsible parties—the government, for instance—the task of removing those "social constructs" that have subjugated women, e.g. laws that restrict abortion and exclude women from full combat roles in the military.

B. **Gay and Lesbian Studies:** Emerged from a series of student protests in 1990, culminating in a November 2 protest in which students, faculty members, and staff blockaded the entrance to the president's office.¹⁸⁵ In response, President Edwards immediately formed "The Committee for Gay and Lesbian Studies" and the faculty quickly approved the committee's proposal. "Lesbian and Gay Studies" was added to the 1993–1994 *Catalogue* under "Additional Areas of Academic Interest" as a form of:

interdisciplinary analysis that both considers the specific cultural achievements of gay men and lesbians, and takes the experience of lesbians and gay men as a critical perspective on the role of sexuality in culture.¹⁸⁶

The *Catalogue*, however, advised that Bowdoin "offers no formal program in lesbian and gay studies" and that interested students should "consult with the Lesbian and Gay Studies Committee." This changed in 2000 with the creation of a minor in gay and lesbian studies.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸²*Bowdoin College Catalogue 1989–1990*, 233.

¹⁸³*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴"Gender and Women's Studies," Bowdoin College, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/gender-women/>.

¹⁸⁵Gary Crosby Brasor, "An Alumnus Learns How Might Makes Right at Bowdoin," *Academic Questions* 5, no. 1 (Winter 1991–92): 50–56.

¹⁸⁶*Bowdoin College Catalogue 1993–1994*, 31–32.

¹⁸⁷*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2000–2001*, 136.

Gay and lesbian studies thus grew out of an effort to appease protestors but quickly found its footing as a favored form of attention given to a population conceptualized as an oppressed minority in need of special treatment. A May 1998 “Report of the Taskforce on Improving the Status of Women at Bowdoin” included a call for “strengthening” gay and lesbian studies programs to assist “the quest for increased tolerance among students and faculty on differences in sexual orientation.” The steps recommended were “an approved minor and an annually offered core course.”¹⁸⁸ The taskforce was pushing on an open door. Less than a year later the Committee for Gay and Lesbian Studies presented its proposal for a minor. That proposal put the program in the mainstream of the emerging field that celebrated “achievements of gay men and lesbians” and posited “the relevance of lesbians and gay perspectives to all students of culture by illuminating the intersection of sexuality and other cultural determinants such as class, race, gender, and ethnicity.”¹⁸⁹

Readers not versed in this area of academic study may need a brief explanation. This is an early enunciation of what has come to be called “queer theory.” Queer theory builds on the idea that sexuality in all its forms—attitudes, behavior, and identity—is “socially constructed,” rather than in any important way founded on nature. Queer theory involves the rejection of heterosexuality as the dominant frame of reference and an attack on what it calls “heteronormativity.” It aims not at social acceptance of homosexuality, but at radical changes in the way all human sexuality is conceived and experienced, with the goal of creating a world where sexual identity is unsettled and fluid.

Sexuality, of course, “intersects” with many “cultural determinants” besides class, race, gender, and ethnicity. The singling out of those four and the silence on many others (e.g., age, locality, upbringing, religious affiliation, educational achievement) are among the indications that the field of gay and lesbian studies at Bowdoin was conceived in the model of group grievance rather than open-ended inquiry. The word “intersection” in the proposal is a clue to the authors’ perspective, “intersectionality” being a key bit of jargon in the group-grievance academic fields.¹⁹⁰ It refers to the overlap of various forms of oppression associated with identity groups, as in the idea that black lesbians are more greatly oppressed than white lesbians, who are relatively “privileged.”

The proposal for a gay and lesbian minor was phrased mostly in terms of scholarship but it nonetheless advances a theoretical perspective with strong political overtones. It described sexuality as

¹⁸⁸“Report of the Taskforce on Improving the Status of Women at Bowdoin,” Bowdoin College, May 1988, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, folder 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹⁸⁹“Proposal for a Minor in Gay and Lesbian Studies at Bowdoin College,” Committee for Gay and Lesbian Studies, Bowdoin College, March 1999, catalog no. 3.28.1, box 1, folder 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹⁹⁰Bruce Bawer, *The Victims’ Revolution: The Rise of Identity Studies and the Closing of the Liberal Mind* (New York: Broadside Books, 2012), 35.

not just a set of sexual practices and desires, but as the complex network of social, economic, political, and aesthetic processes in which those practices and desires come to have meaning. Like race, class, and gender, sexuality is one of the basic terms whereby people are categorized, interpreted and misinterpreted.¹⁹¹

And it credited gays and lesbians with special insights:

Because the marginalized position of lesbians and gay men constitutes a uniquely favorable vantage point from which to view what might otherwise look like a flatly dualistic homo/heterosexual landscape as an interestingly various and complex range of sexualities [*sic*], Lesbian and Gay Studies remains the rubric under which the cultural dynamics of sexuality are now being examined most trenchantly.¹⁹²

This vantage point of critique—the “marginalized position”—makes it akin to women’s studies. “Lesbian and Gay Studies has in many ways evolved out of Women’s Studies,” said the proposal. Like women’s studies, gay and lesbian studies would “counteract some of the legacy of Bowdoin’s all male history and help change the climate for women on campus.”¹⁹³ Women’s studies and gay and lesbian studies were never exclusively academic at Bowdoin. They won their place in the curriculum by promising to bring about a change in campus culture and by elevating the principle of “tolerance.”

The self-diagnosed marginalization that links them together also links them to the race and ethnicity-based multicultural programs. The idea is that all the groups represented by the “studies” programs are united by the experience of being socially oppressed, and this makes “oppression” and the efforts to overcome it a main narrative of a liberal education. The Taskforce on Improving the Status of Women at Bowdoin reported in 1998 that “a consensus that the linkage of gender equity issues with multicultural concerns has been a fruitful alliance and should continue.”¹⁹⁴ Our analysis of cross-listings earlier in this report documents the extensive overlap in courses among the various studies programs. “A History of the Global Aids Epidemic,” for example, is cross-listed as Africana Studies 231 and as Gay and Lesbian Studies 231. “Construction of the Goddess and Deification of Women in Hindu Religious Traditions” is cross-listed as Asian Studies 289, Gender and Women’s Studies 289, and Religion 289. “Labor, Gender, and Immigration in the United States-Mexico Borderlands” is cross-listed as Gender and Women’s Studies 258, Latin American Studies 260, and History 260.

C. And D. **Asian Studies:** Emerged in 1987. **Latin American Studies:** Emerged in 1989. Both were later flowerings of a Bowdoin movement that can be traced back to the 1965 “Report

¹⁹¹“Proposal for a Minor in Gay and Lesbian Studies at Bowdoin College,” Committee for Gay and Lesbian Studies, Bowdoin College, March 1999, catalog no. 3.28.1, box 1, folder 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³“Report of the Taskforce on Improving the Status of Women at Bowdoin,” Bowdoin College, May 1988, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, folder 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

of the Committee on Non-Western Studies,” which called for ridding Bowdoin of Western “ethnocentrism”:

The curriculum in the Social Sciences and Humanities at Bowdoin is currently devoted almost exclusively to the western world, its past and present. This needs to be changed because education should liberate men from ignorance, and ethnocentricity is a form of ignorance. The well educated person should have some contact with a totally different civilization not only as an indispensable part of knowledge of how the world is, but also as a means of better understanding his own western tradition. This exclusive devotion to the western world was as wrong 100 years ago as it is today. It is less excusable today, however, when contact between representatives of different civilizations is an everyday occurrence.¹⁹⁵

These “area study” concentrations, of course, make good sense as ways of gathering together language, literature, history, and other courses that have a common geographical or cultural denominator. But Asian studies and Latin American studies at Bowdoin are also intended to serve three other purposes: to repudiate Western ethnocentrism, to aid in the recruitment of minority faculty members, and to enhance the college’s appeal to minority students. For example, a 1992 “Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity,” endorsed by the faculty, addressed “the impact of our curriculum on recruiting for diversity.” It continued:

If we are really interested in attracting a more diverse faculty, the place to start is the job description. Although it would be unfortunate and untrue to think that faculty candidates from diverse minority groups only teach and research “minority” issues, a significant number do. People of color who become faculty members often take unconventional views and approaches in fields that are at the margins, some would say forefront, of traditional disciplines.

That report cites the experience of the Romance language department as an example of how area studies can make it “easier to recruit a diverse faculty.” The Romance language department found:

more diverse candidates when it decided to make francophone American literature one among the several possible subfields for its faculty position.¹⁹⁶

Interestingly, as of 2001–2002, Latin American studies has recognized French as one of the three languages that can fulfill its language requirement for the major. This seems to stretch the underlying idea of Latin American studies. French is one of two official languages in Haiti, where it is the first language of 10 to 15 percent of the population. French is also spoken in

¹⁹⁵“The Report of the Committee on Non-Western Studies,” Bowdoin College, 1965, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 4, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹⁹⁶“Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity,” Bowdoin College, November 9, 1992, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, folder 88, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint Martin, and Saint Barthélemy, but doesn't provide an especially valuable point of access to South America and Central America. Its inclusion as a language option in the Latin American studies program illustrates how the pursuit of "diversity" under the area studies rubric favors curricular diffusion and works against the principle of distinguishing the more important from the less important aspects of a topic.

E. **Environmental Studies:** Emerged at Bowdoin in 1970, several months after the first Earth Day (April 22) had drawn massive participation on the nation's college campuses. The 1960s witnessed the transformation of America's older traditions of conservation, which turned a corner in 1962 with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.¹⁹⁷ Carson warned that America was poisoning itself with pesticides and identified DDT as a particular threat. Her book was a massive bestseller and established a new genre of environmental writing focused on "impending calamity" and a sense of doom. Other writers, notably the biologist Barry Commoner and doom-minded biologist Paul R. Ehrlich, took up the cause

This was the cultural and political context surrounding Bowdoin's original venture into "environmental studies." But like the environmental movement itself, environmental studies was at the beginning of a journey from which it would emerge as the even more encompassing movement known as "sustainability." A key moment in that transformation was the release in 1987 of a report from the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, the so-called Brundtland Report. The report offered a definition of "sustainable development" that has become the touchstone of the broader movement:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.¹⁹⁸

The Brundtland Report spawned the "Earth Summit," the name for the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Several things came out of that summit, including the authorization of a new, permanent U.N. agency, the Commission on Sustainable Development; the "Rio Declaration" laying out twenty-seven principles of sustainability; and "Agenda 21," a plan to repair manmade harm to the environment worldwide mostly through government action. That same year Al Gore published his best-selling *Earth in the Balance*, which called for making "the rescue of the Earth the central organizing principle for civilization."¹⁹⁹

The Brundtland Commission didn't invent the concept of sustainability, but it propelled what had been a minor thread in the environmental movement to international prominence. Themes that had languished in the background for about a decade suddenly moved into bright

¹⁹⁷Glenn M. Ricketts, "The Roots of Sustainability," *Academic Questions* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 20–53.

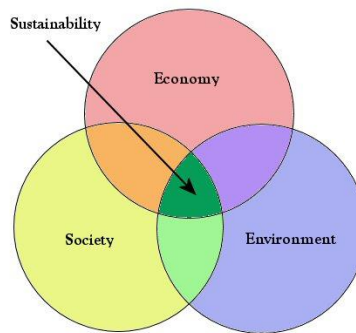
¹⁹⁸World Commission on Environment and Development, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* (New York: United Nations, 1987), 34, <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>.

¹⁹⁹Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 269.

focus. Perhaps the most important of these was the idea that “sustainability” required its advocates to commit beyond the repair and defense of the environment to two more things: to replace market economies with more “equitable” economic systems in which state and international bodies could exercise better stewardship over economic choices, and to engage in systematic efforts to achieve “social justice” by transferring wealth from developed to underdeveloped nations and eliminating racism, oppression of women, and other forms of oppression.

“Sustainability” became shorthand for the effort to combine all three themes—environment, economy, and social justice—into a single political movement. One symbol of this combination was a Venn diagram of three overlapping circles with the intersection of all three labeled “sustainable.” Here is a commonly used example:

Figure 37: Sustainability Venn Diagram



First published in a 1987 journal article, this diagram soon became a folk icon of the movement, appearing with hundreds of variations in flyers, posters, PowerPoints, and scholarly publications.²⁰⁰ One especially popular version of the idea was the phrase “Triple Bottom Line,” coined in 1997 by John Elkington.²⁰¹

The general history of the movement would take us too far afield from Bowdoin’s particular institutional involvement with it, but it is important to register that the environmental-cum-sustainability movement remains primarily focused on social and political advocacy and only secondarily on academic scholarship. Indeed, one major theme of the Earth Summit was the need to bring the movement to college campuses, where it had not yet caught on. The idea was that a successful political movement in developed countries needed a way to recruit college students.

Senator John Kerry, among others, sought support for the cause from college and university presidents. He founded a group called Second Nature to promote the “American

²⁰⁰Edward B. Barbier, “The Concept of Sustainable Economic Development,” *Environmental Conservation* 14, no. 2 (1987): 101–10.

²⁰¹John Elkington, *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business* (Oxford: Capstone Publishing, 1998).

College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment" (ACUPCC), which put the signatory presidents on record as

deeply concerned about the unprecedented scale and speed of global warming and its potential for large-scale, adverse health, social, economic and ecological effects

and ready to support various actions to set things right:

We believe colleges and universities must exercise leadership in their communities and throughout society by modeling ways to minimize global warming emissions, and by providing the knowledge and the educated graduates to achieve climate neutrality.

Campuses that address the climate challenge by reducing global warming emissions and by integrating sustainability into their curriculum will better serve their students and meet their social mandate to help create a thriving, ethical and civil society.²⁰²

President Mills signed the Climate Commitment in 2007. Bowdoin now stands among 677 colleges and universities to have signed. Roughly a third of college students attend an institution whose president has made this commitment, which effectively silences debate on the core questions of how much global warming has occurred, whether human activity is the primary cause, what are the likely consequences, and whether cutting fossil fuel consumption is a meaningful remedy. Instead, inquiry is funneled solely to the question of how fast supposed remedial measures can be enacted.

In November 2009, Bowdoin took the next requisite steps and submitted its "Climate Action Plan for Bowdoin College" (formally titled "Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan") to the ACUPCC Reporting System. It submitted its 2011 update as well.²⁰³ In its 2009 action plan, it announced that "Bowdoin College has made a commitment to become carbon-neutral by the year 2020." We'll return to that shortly.

Bowdoin has taken other steps to build an institutional commitment to sustainability, including the 2001 appointment of Keisha Payson to the new position of Coordinator for Sustainable Bowdoin. "Sustainable Bowdoin," also known as Bowdoin's Sustainability Office, "coordinates the efforts of students, faculty and staff who are working to improve Bowdoin's environmental performance."²⁰⁴ Sustainable Bowdoin provides an umbrella for numerous programs including energy conservation, recycling, alternative transportation, and "environmentally preferable purchasing," and assists the "many student clubs focused on sustainability," but it is only indirectly related to Bowdoin's academic program. Sustainable

²⁰²Text of the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment," American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment, <http://www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org/about/commitment>.

²⁰³"Bowdoin College: Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan," rev. October 22, 2009, American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment, ACUPCC Reporting System, http://rs.acupcc.org/site_media/uploads/cap/339-cap.pdf. The update, "Carbon Neutrality Implementation Plan: First Update–2011," is available at <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/carbon-neutrality/pdf/final-climate-neutrality-implementation-plan-update.pdf>.

²⁰⁴"Sustainable Bowdoin," Bowdoin College, Sustainability, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/campus-initiatives/index.shtml>.

Bowdoin shows the breadth of the college's commitment to sustainability. The environmental studies academic program plays a specific pedagogical role in advancing this activist movement.

Bowdoin's 2009 "Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan" offers seventy-four pages of detail on how the college will reduce its carbon emissions. Part of the plan focuses on "Behavioral Changes," i.e., "encouraging students, staff and faculty to reduce their individual energy use."²⁰⁵ It would require that students, staff, and faculty undergo "continual education and awareness training." This training would involve a persistent effort by Bowdoin to seek to establish new "social norms" that would "change behavioral patterns" and influence "actions, habits, and decision-making." Bowdoin suggests that this "awareness training" could include some startling interventions by academic departments:

The Psychology Department could play an important role in helping establish these norms and facilitating behavioral changes at Bowdoin to help reduce emissions. Behavioral change is contingent on the psychological processes of the individual, and using a psychological approach can help in understanding what motivates change. A behavioral study or survey of the Bowdoin community could indicate the best ways to approach behavioral change initiatives at the College and help establish energy conservation as the norm.²⁰⁶

We do not know whether Bowdoin has undertaken this survey,²⁰⁷ but we do know that in its pursuit of carbon neutrality, Bowdoin is ready to draw academic departments into figuring out how to change student behavior.²⁰⁸

The environmental studies program is central to the "Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan." It is presented along with the coastal studies program and the Arctic Studies Center (neither of which is degree-granting) as an "interdisciplinary program" of great value to Bowdoin's effort to modify behavior. The "Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan" depicts environmental studies (ES) as an academic program pursuing a certain line of intellectual inquiry, but also and more emphatically as part of a campus-wide initiative aimed at recruiting student loyalty to a public cause. Its role is "to deliver environmental literacy (EL)."²⁰⁹ But the "Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan" warns that "giving ES responsibility for EL" ought not to "absolve" the rest of the campus from doing its part.

Here again we encounter a version of "intersectionality," which we discussed above in the description of gay and lesbian studies, i.e. the idea that the various "interdisciplinary studies"

²⁰⁵"Bowdoin College: Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan," 30.

²⁰⁶Ibid., 29.

²⁰⁷We wrote to the psychology department chair to learn whether the survey was carried out but received no reply.

²⁰⁸In turning to the psychology department for help, Bowdoin cites an October 20, 2005 American Psychological Association article, "Shaping Pro-Environment Behaviors," <http://www.apa.org/research/action/shaping.aspx>.

²⁰⁹"Bowdoin College: Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan," 51.

departments that focus on political advocacy have a natural affinity with one another. In this case:

Understanding environmental change and its impact on natural and social systems is a critical frame of analysis that needs to be added to the repertoire of student perspectives (such as race, class, and gender) and competencies (such as writing, quantitative skills, and languages). It is core to the general education mission of the liberal arts curriculum of the 21st century.²¹⁰

“Understanding environmental change” is probably a worthwhile educational goal, though it seems a stretch to say it merits being treated as a fundamental skill comparable to writing and quantitative literacy. One problem is that “understanding environmental change” is not a specific skill. It is an application of many skills to a large and various group of conceptual problems. Once we begin to examine the problems in particular, the “understandings” that are needed turn out to be biology, chemistry, physics, geology, astronomy, mathematics, and so on.

A phrase to take note of in the block quote above is “the repertoire of student perspectives,” as if the promulgation of race-class-gender analysis and the addition of sustainability arose from the students rather than being a set of ideas that Bowdoin strenuously strives to instill in students. The document does, however, caution that “adding an environmental frame to courses [across the curriculum] does not connote advocating a particular agenda or ideology.”²¹¹ This, however, seems to be an empty rhetorical gesture. The frame itself promotes “a particular agenda or ideology.” Bowdoin offers, according to the implementation plan’s own count, “29 courses related to climate change or sustainability,” through the environmental studies program, as well as “many more” courses it classifies as “sustainability cognate courses” throughout the curriculum.²¹² What are sustainability cognate courses? They are:

courses that are instrumental to understanding ES issues or whose lines of inquiry are useful for cultivating sustainability “habits of mind.”²¹³

By contrast, there are no courses that offer critical or dissenting views on anthropogenic climate change, sustainability, or the history of the environmental movement. Bowdoin may think it is not “advocating a particular agenda or ideology” but the alternatives to the position the college took in signing the American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment are conspicuous by their absence.

The “Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan” represents the college administration’s official view of how the environmental studies program contributes to Bowdoin’s “climate commitment.” But this is not a case of the administration framing a program in a manner out of

²¹⁰Ibid., 52.

²¹¹Ibid.

²¹²Ibid., 54.

²¹³Ibid.

keeping with the program's view of itself. The chair of environmental studies, associate professor Philip Camill, contributed to the plan, and in reporting about it to the Faculty in 2009 echoed its terms. He said:

While the Environmental Studies program is a natural focal point for environmental literacy, the issue is too important and large not to have the entire campus community involved in the conversation.²¹⁴

To this end, Camill called for building the Bowdoin community around sustainability activism, an effort he imagined might include

first-year seminar clusters, workshops, case studies, or different ways of framing courses, and might look at how environmental issues intersect with race, class and gender.²¹⁵

Note again the call for intersectionality. Those not attuned to the sustainability movement may remain puzzled about how sustainability intersects with race, class, and gender. The sorts of things that sustainability activists draw on to make these connections are, for example, the citing of waste treatment plants in minority neighborhoods (race), the ability of affluent communities to zone out polluting industries (class), and the “gender gap” in sustainable development.²¹⁶

F. **Africana Studies:** Originally Afro-American studies, it emerged in 1969. A tense exchange on March 17, 1969, between Daniel Levine and the members of the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee (CEP) marked one of the opening rounds of the campus debate that would eventually bring to Bowdoin the range of identity group and political advocacy programs. Levine, the Thomas Brackett Reed Professor of History and Political Science and chairman of the history department, was also serving as chairman of the Subcommittee on Afro-American studies.

Levine pushed the CEP to “not delay” the creation of Afro-American studies. Members of the CEP voiced doubt that there were enough relevant courses to comprise such a program. The CEP minutes recording this exchange are presented in an unusual literary voice.

Someone on the CEP: “Can it be?”

Levine: “It must be!”

The CEP secretary continued, “[A] general doubt was raised concerning the efficacy of The Will as a sufficient cause in such matters.”²¹⁷ The CEP then questioned whether new courses could be developed within the six months left before the start of the fall 1969 semester:

²¹⁴Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, November 2, 2009, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

²¹⁵Ibid.

²¹⁶See, for example, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Gender and Sustainable Development: Maximizing the Economic, Social and Environmental Role of Women* (Paris: OECD, 2008), <http://www.oecd.org/social/40881538.pdf>.

²¹⁷Minutes of the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee, Bowdoin College, March 17, 1969, catalog no. 1.7.4, vol. 2, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

Mr. Levine said that if the Faculty decided to give such courses it could give such courses...

But:

To many of the Committee this appeared a peculiarly dangerous instance of putting the cart before the horse...In responding to a question concerning faculty to teach in the Afro-American Studies program, Mr. Levine said the college ought to start with a curriculum and then find black faculty to teach it.²¹⁸

Levine pitched the program as a matter of social justice, and was not hindered by the absence of scholars to teach it or scholarship to be taught. Building the program would empower black students who could help figure out what the program would entail, and the program would bring black faculty members to Bowdoin. Levine expatiated:

The Director of the program ought be black and black faculty ought be recruited for it but that skin color was not a necessary qualification for the teaching of any particular course and that a program taught by pinko-gray professors was better than no program at all.

(“Pinko-gray” is an allusion, perhaps no longer easily recognized, to E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924), where it appears in chapter 7 as, “The so-called white races are really pinko-grey.”)

Despite the CEP’s evident skepticism, it endorsed the recommendation from the Subcommittee on Afro-American Studies. After the faculty also endorsed it, the Afro-American studies program was founded.

The debate within the CEP wasn’t the only discussion of the idea during Spring 1969. For example, the *Bowdoin Alumnus* quoted A. Leroy Greason, dean of the college:

As for the black history, black culture, and all that might comprise the black curriculum, these courses must be offered and be staffed with blacks, too, *if that is what black students want*. The desperate need of blacks to feel at home—even in academic disciplines—in a traditionally white society must be answered.²¹⁹ (emphasis added)

Presumably when the dean of the college has already announced his commitment to the creation of a program, the CEP is under pressure to approve it. Greason, of course, went on to become Bowdoin’s president (1981–1990).

From the start, Afro-American studies fused academic pursuits with social activism, setting the path that women’s studies, gay and lesbian studies, and the other interdisciplinary programs would follow. Levine’s subcommittee’s proposal, “Afro-American Studies at

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹Quoted in Robert Johnson, “Bowdoin Afro-American Society: The First Three Years,” unpublished paper, November 1999.

Bowdoin,” argued for the establishment of the program on the grounds that Bowdoin, like American society, has suffered from moral blindness:

We feel that there is a fundamental blindness in the college curriculum, as there is in American society generally, to the existence of black human beings. This blindness is most clearly and most dangerously evident with respect to black civilizations and their interaction with white civilizations. . . . The curriculum, through its silence, its lack of seriousness about things black, reveals moreover an intellectual complacency about the problematic nature of our institutions, values, and way of life.²²⁰

The answer the subcommittee proposed to this blindness/silence was a kind of racial separatism:

So we must recognize the fundamental fact that being black in the United States, no matter what other characteristics a person may have, is a different experience from being white. Thus when a black student comes to college his educational needs are different from those of a white freshman.²²¹

The idea that black students have “educational needs” that differ from those of white students bears more than a trace of racial stereotyping and has sat uneasily on the conscience of the college.

The decision to move ahead with Afro-American studies on the grounds that black students wanted it is also an instance of a college treating its academic programs as a consumer good. The idea that college courses could be packaged this way, of course, was not entirely new, but such consumerism was (and still is) alien to the spirit of liberal arts education. Once it was adduced as a positive principle for recruiting black students to Bowdoin, it became harder to limit its applicability. Thus President Howell’s embrace of Afro-American studies dovetailed with his decision to abolish all core academic requirements and let students decide for themselves what they wanted to study. The two developments—activist-inspired programs and student consumerism—emerged in the same epoch. Howell’s predecessor, President Coles, had begun the move towards research specialization and more individualized curricula. But Howell intensified these initiatives and linked them to the new politically activist spirit. After that, the two developments seem to have accelerated each other’s rise to dominance.

Within a few years Bowdoin felt the need to reexamine the program. In 1971, a “Proposed Revision of the Bowdoin Afro-American Studies Program” was introduced. It mainly asked for some changes within the requirements for the major in Afro-American studies, but the rationale is more interesting than the query:

²²⁰“Afro-American Studies at Bowdoin,” Bowdoin College, April 2, 1969, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 5, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

²²¹Ibid.

Today, the term ‘Black Studies’ signifies a relevant, interdisciplinary educational program through which Black people achieve psychological identity and strength.²²²

This psycho-therapeutic motive for black studies was reinforced in the reasons the proposal offers for expanding the program:

One need for Black Studies is for the correction of historical and cultural myths...

A second need is to “provide potential elementary and secondary school teachers, destined to serve in Black communities, with much more knowledge about those with whom they will be working.”

Third is the “need to begin the process of resocialization and socialization of Americans destined to play roles in the United States of the next sixty years.”

As the fourth need, Professor Reid states that “Black Studies Programs can fulfill a psychological need on the part of Black students.”²²³

We are not clear on whether the 1971 proposal was also accepted, but the program continued to evolve. A retrospective article in *Bowdoin Magazine* in 2011 noted the context in which the program was renamed “Africana Studies”:

Historian Randy Stakeman took over the reins [of Afro-American Studies] in 1989, ostensibly for a three-year turn, and ended up heading the department for much longer than he bargained, 17 years. He pushed to expand and codify the global focus of the program, which eventually led to the 1993 name change to Africana Studies.

“It was obvious even then that there was globalization going on in a way that would bring people of color from non-U.S. roots into the country and that needed to be studied,” said Stakeman. “You needed to look at Africana Studies in the same way that you looked at Asian Studies: the examination of a large contingent of the world. Once you expand your focus, rather than thinking of it as a sop or something you were throwing out to the African American students, it changes your entire conception of what it should be.”²²⁴

“Throwing something out to the African American students,” i.e., providing psychological support and therapy, was, of course, much of the moral impulse behind Levine’s proposal and in the 1971 proposal for revisions. But by 1993, the condescension embedded in this rationale had become too much to bear and a more intellectually neutral reason was put forward. *Africana* studies would, oddly, legitimate itself by borrowing the logic behind one of its interdisciplinary progeny, Asian Studies.

²²²“Proposed Revision of the Bowdoin Afro-American Studies Program,” Bowdoin College, May 24, 1971, catalog no. 3.1.1, box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

²²³The internal quotes are from Inez Smith Reid, “An Analysis of Black Studies Programs,” *Afro-American Studies* 1, no. 11 (May 1970): 11–21.

²²⁴Selby Frame, “Africana Studies: A World Dialogue, a Campus Conversation,” *Bowdoin Magazine* 82, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 20–28.

Africana Studies today offers courses such as “Affirmative Action and United States Society,” “Black Women, Politics, Music, and the Divine,” “Transnational Africa and Globalization,” “History of African and African Diasporic Political Thought,” “The African American Experience in Europe,” “Protest Music,” “Global History of the Ghetto,” “A History of the Global AIDS Epidemic,” “Martin, Malcolm and America,” “Spirit Come Down: Black Women and Religion,” and “Race and Sexuality in Modern America.” This seems a scattered miscellany of topics, perhaps representing the scattered miscellany of the academic specializations of the faculty. It doesn’t, in any case, add up to a coherent curriculum. It is something of a model of the entropy—pedagogical, intellectual, and curricular—that is characteristic of the college. It does convey the “intersectionality” of the various identity-based programs. Africana studies is plainly allied with gender and women’s studies and with gay and lesbian studies.

Bowdoin today reads “Old Bowdoin’s” lack of curricular focus on gays and lesbians, women, African Americans, Latin Americans, and Asians as evidence that it was racist, sexist, heterosexist, and classist. Its new “identity” programs are thus seen by Bowdoin as devices to redress the wounds of history and to overcome “ethnocentrism” and the legacy of the college’s “all-male history.” Bowdoin, however, does not have identity-based programs for every group that might have suffered injustice in the past. It offers Asian studies, Africana studies, and Latin American studies, but it does not, for example, offer Chicano studies or Native American studies, though many other colleges and universities do. Bowdoin has also declined to embrace the broader rubrics under which these programs are sometimes gathered such as ethnic studies and cultural studies. Bowdoin offers gender and women’s studies and gay and lesbian studies, but it does not offer, as some colleges do, men’s studies—“a camouflage version of women’s studies,” as one critic has called it.²²⁵ Neither does Bowdoin offer disability studies, poverty studies, hate studies, fat studies, or white studies, among the growing list of victim-centered academic programs that have cropped up in recent years.

The six advocacy-based “studies” programs at Bowdoin contrast to varying degrees with the rest of Bowdoin’s academic organization. Some of the contrast is historical. All of these programs emerged from a combination of impulses to change the world rather than just to study it; all of them were put forward and developed (perhaps with the exception of environmental studies) to advance the project of making the student body more diverse, and to recruit faculty members too on the basis of their “social identities,” not just their scholarly accomplishments and their ability to teach. All of this continued. And it is clear that the pursuit of racial equity—what most people refer to as “affirmative action”—played a key role in the politicization of Bowdoin.

Bowdoin in the late 1960s reached a point where it was not satisfied with educating young men in the liberal arts tradition, but wanted instead to confront what the college’s leaders

²²⁵David Clements, quoted in Bawer, *Victims’ Revolution*, 317.

took to be the great social and political challenges of the age. The “studies” programs were the most fervent expression of Bowdoin’s new political vision. Many practitioners in these fields pretty openly wear their ambition to marry scholarship with political action or to abolish the distinction between the two. Bowdoin, at least in its official statements, treats this convergence warily. Our whole inquiry grew from the original question of whether and how much the education Bowdoin offers has been politicized. The existence of these studies programs stands as one important line of evidence that Bowdoin’s curriculum is indeed deeply politicized.

The Shape of Bowdoin’s Curriculum

18.8 percent of the courses Bowdoin offered in academic years 2011-2012 were in the sciences; 31.3 percent were in the humanities; 21.5 percent were in the social sciences; 12.3 percent were in the arts; 16 percent were in the interdisciplinary studies fields.

In 2011-2012, 24.2 percent of the faculty members at Bowdoin held academic appointment in the sciences; 31.1 percent were in the humanities; 23.5 percent were in the social sciences; 12.5 percent were in the arts; 8.7 percent were in the interdisciplinary studies fields. These totals include some Bowdoin faculty members who hold multiple appointments.²²⁶

The proportions of courses and of faculty members can be fairly understood as indices of the relative emphasis of these divisions of knowledge and inquiry in the Bowdoin curriculum.

As we have seen, Bowdoin’s academic requirements rest very lightly on the shoulders of students. The one-semester First-Year Seminar demands only that a student select a course from a smorgasbord of over thirty topical courses that range across the whole curriculum. Distribution requirements specify only that somewhere during the student’s four-year program he take one course each in science, math, art, “Exploring Social Differences,” and “International Perspectives.” The nominally separate “divisional” requirements specify even less: one course each in the sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. The requirements of the major at Bowdoin are more demanding, but there are 33 majors to choose from along with the option for the student to invent his own. And within majors, course options abound.

In sum, Bowdoin puts no emphasis at all on students studying the same thing. Students achieve educational coherence, as President Howell proposed in 1969, not by following a “prescribed” path of courses but by being “liberated” to follow their own evolving interests. This liberation has proven to be popular with students and, for a somewhat different reason, with faculty members too. But it has also left Bowdoin with an enduring difficulty. Many of its students end up with peculiarly narrow and prematurely specialized programs of study that can only with some strain be fit to the concept of “a liberal education.”

²²⁶Under Officers of Instruction in the *2011-2012 Catalogue*, 20 (7.6 percent) of the teaching faculty appointments were listed as dual-teaching appointments. Thirteen (65 percent) of these dual-appointments included a partial appointment in what we have described as “intersectional” programs. Asian Studies alone accounted for 7 (35 percent) of the total. We did not include in these numbers dual-appointments in which part of the appointment was not a teaching appointment.

The strain is acted out by imaginative efforts to redefine liberal education. At Bowdoin, these reimaginings focus on what we call “key concepts,” to which we now turn.

Chapter 4

Key Concepts

In this section we set out to examine a college through the terms it uses to express its aspirations and discontents. In its *Catalogue*, Bowdoin offers “A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College,” an eloquent and rather lofty pronouncement on what liberal education is. That

statement deploys a number of terms that bear examination. They encode Bowdoin’s main ideas about itself. In this chapter we review those terms and some others that play a prominent role in how Bowdoin presents itself.

Some important parts of what Bowdoin teaches are conveyed in contexts apart from the classroom and in modes other than classroom pedagogy. The key concepts are conveyed in Bowdoin’s formal statements such as official pronouncements, presidential speeches, and publications. But they are also expressed, perhaps more importantly, in student life, everyday conversation, and campus controversy.

In this section we have picked out eight “key concepts”: the common good, storytelling, “Bowdoin” itself, culture, difference, diversity, sustainability, and gender. The list is not exhaustive. We chose these eight because of their prominence. Each term has “insider” meanings that we try to decode for the non-Bowdoin reader. The terms also lie at the center of the controversies through which Bowdoin defines itself.

I. The Common Good

The “common good” is possibly the most frequently uttered phrase at Bowdoin College today. Students are introduced to the idea early on, indeed before they even enroll. The “Required Short Essay” on Bowdoin’s application form comes with these instructions:

Bowdoin students and alumni often cite world-class faculty and opportunities for intellectual engagement, the College’s commitment to the Common Good, and the special quality of life on the coast of Maine as important aspects of the Bowdoin experience.

Reflecting on your own interests and experiences, please comment on one of the following:

1. Intellectual engagement
2. The Common Good
3. Connection to place²²⁷

The Common Good, in fact, is a recently revived term. At the NAS website, we provide a history of the term’s origin and use up to the presidency of Barry Mills.²²⁸ In this section, we focus on its contemporary use. But it is best to begin with a synopsis of the term’s history.

Goodness before Mills

The “Common Good” comes from President Joseph McKeen’s 1802 inaugural address:

²²⁷“Bowdoin Supplement to the Common Application for Admission,” http://www.bowdoin.edu/admissions/pdf/Bowdoin_Supplement_2012_2013.pdf.

²²⁸See Peter Wood and Michael Toscano, “The Common Good’s Uncommon Usage,” National Association of Scholars, http://www.nas.org/images/documents/The_Common_Goods_Uncommon_Usage.pdf.

It ought always to be remembered, that literary institutions are founded and endowed for the common good, and not for the private advantage of those who resort to them for education. It is not that they may be enabled to pass through life in an easy or reputable manner, but that their mental powers may be cultivated and improved for the benefit of society. It if be true, that no man should live to himself, we may safely assert, that every man who has been aided by a public institution to acquire an education, and to qualify himself for usefulness, is under peculiar obligations to exert his talents for the public good.²²⁹

McKeen's anodyne invocation of the public responsibilities that come as an obligation of higher learning was a familiar eighteenth-century conceit. In *The American College and University: A History*, historian Frederick Rudolph commented that "President McKeen spoke not only in the tradition of Puritan colleges, of New England, but of the entire Western world of the time."²³⁰ When President Kennedy, in his 1961 inaugural address, said, "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country," he touched this chord. McKeen, a strong supporter of George Washington's Federalist Party, would have a clear idea what he meant by "the benefit of society." He was speaking of the need in the young republic to build a society that upheld the rule of law and public order.

In fact, McKeen was recycling something he had said once before—in a tribute to Washington as part of his Election Day sermon at the State House in Boston on May 28, 1800. William Watterson, Bowdoin's Edward Little Professor of the English Language and Literature, drew attention to this in a 2007 letter to the *Bowdoin Orient*:

The climactic paragraphs of that sermon pay tribute to George Washington, who died on December 14, 1799. In McKeen's homage, the late president is represented as exhorting the elected officials to put the "good" of their constituents above their own self-advancement in language quite similar to that quoted above:

"Imagine, honored fathers, that ye hear him [Washington], though dead, yet speaking to you. And is not his language to this effect? 'Remember that you are not elevated to your present places for personal emolument, but for the good of your fellow mortals, whose happiness in life depends much on your conduct.'"

In McKeen's inaugural address *vis a vis* his earlier Election Day sermon "good" becomes the "common good" and "personal emolument" (a phrase actually used by Washington in *his* first inaugural address as president of the United States in 1792) becomes "private advantage." In the second, arguably pithier version of the idea of placing service above

²²⁹Joseph McKeen, "Inaugural Address," September 2, 1802, in *Sober Consent of the Heart: The Bowdoin College Chapel Messages of Its First President, Joseph McKeen, DD, Delivered 1802–1806*, ed. Robert B. Gregory (Damariscotta, ME : Rocky Hill, 2011), 19–21. Address available at <http://www.bowdoin.edu/mckeen-center/about/inaugural-address.shtml>.

²³⁰Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 59.

self, the McKeen of 1802 effectively borrowed from the McKeen of 1800, who had himself in turn paraphrased in quotation marks the father of our country in the early years of the republic.²³¹

Charles Dorn, associate professor of education at Bowdoin, has examined the context of McKeen's use of the term "the common good." In a 2011 *Teachers College Record* article, Dorn noted how McKeen's near contemporaries spoke similarly:

His view was shared by many during the era, such as John Witherspoon, who in 1772 insisted that graduates of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University) "apply their talents to the service of the public and the good of mankind."²³²

In the vocabulary of Bowdoin students in the first half of the nineteenth century, the common good was a matter of "active duties of busy life," "future usefulness," obedience to the laws, moderation, and service.²³³ In the minds of the Bowdoin community these were explicitly Christian duties. Dorn noted, "As the diaries suggest, students made no distinction between serving God and serving society."²³⁴ McKeen's idea of "the Common Good" bridged his ideas about the importance of cultivating "virtue and piety" and his hope for building the nation.²³⁵

In the two centuries between the inaugurations of Presidents McKeen and Mills, the term went in and out of fashion. It was absent from the inauguration addresses of Presidents Chamberlain, Sills, Coles, and Howell.²³⁶ Sills referred to it once in a 1945 speech, but by the late 1960s, as President Mills recalled, the term had disappeared.²³⁷ It reappeared in the 1985–1986 *Catalogue* after President Greason used it in a speech in August 1985.²³⁸ By 1989, it had become entwined with the emerging "diversity" rationale for racial preferences in Bowdoin admissions.²³⁹ President Edwards (1990–2001) returned to it often. Edwards adopted the motto "Bowdoin and the Common Good" for Bowdoin's 1994 Bicentennial celebration, at which he awarded the college's first "Common Good Award."²⁴⁰ Edwards included "the common good" in

²³¹William C. Watterson, "Washington behind Bowdoin Tradition," *Bowdoin Orient*, March 2, 2007, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/2464>.

²³²Dorn, "'Liberal Professions' to 'Lucrative Professions,'" 1573.

²³³*Ibid.*, 1576–77.

²³⁴*Ibid.*, 1578.

²³⁵The promotion of "virtue and piety" is specified in Bowdoin's charter of 1794 as one of its central purposes. The phrase remains in Bowdoin's charter today: <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/governance/charter.shtml>.

²³⁶We have not had the opportunity to examine the inaugural speeches of Presidents Appleton, Allen, Woods, Harris, Hyde, Enteman, Greason, and Edwards.

²³⁷Barry Mills, "Convocation 2007 Welcome: President Barry Mills," *Campus News*, Bowdoin College, August 28, 2007, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1bowdoincampus/004401.shtml>.

²³⁸A. Leroy Greason, *Bowdoin and "The Common Good"* (New York: The Newcomen Society of the United States, 1985), <http://www.bowdoin.edu/mckeen-center/about/peculiar-obligations/images/pdf-docs/Bowdoin%20and%20The%20Common%20Good-Greason.pdf>.

²³⁹*Bowdoin Catalogue 1989–1990*, 64.

²⁴⁰"Jill Shaw Ruddock '77 to Receive 2012 Common Good Award," *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, April 17, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/jill->

his 1999 “Mission of the College,” where he called it one of Bowdoin’s two “guiding ideas.”²⁴¹ But it fell to his successor, President Mills, to make the Common Good Bowdoin’s signature trope.

The Goodness of Mills

In his 2001 inaugural address, President Mills invoked “the Common Good” five times, first by pledging to “work tirelessly with you to advance Bowdoin’s commitment to inquiry, to learning, and to serving the Common Good.” He closed by saying:

Finally, let me conclude today where Bowdoin began—committed to the Common Good.

As many of you know, the ideal of service to the Common Good was introduced at Bowdoin in the inaugural speech of the College’s first president, Joseph McKeen. It was probably the most memorable statement any Bowdoin president has ever made. ‘Literary institutions,’ said McKeen, “are founded and endowed for the common good and not for the private advantage of those who resort to them for education.”

We repeat these words often around here because they underscore a basic canon of this place. McKeen set the tone for generations of Bowdoin students who would live their lives as leaders committed to the Common Good.

Here on this campus, there are no spectators—only participants. We maintain the highest standards and demand that our students take responsibility for themselves and their community.²⁴²

It is immediately clear, however, that the common good of Mills exists in a different moral universe from the common good of McKeen. Where McKeen spoke of “virtue” and “duties,” and inveighed against those who “have no fixed principles by which to form their judgment,”²⁴³ Mills declared:

Our job is to provide students with the intellectual grounding to make what they consider to be the correct decision for themselves, their families, and their communities.²⁴⁴

Mills cited Harvard child psychiatrist Robert Coles’s idea that you should have a “real honest talk with yourself” to find out what you “really believe is right” and then “convince others to go in the direction you are going.”²⁴⁵ Mills then extolled this compelling moral vision:

[shaw-ruddock-%E2%80%9977-to-receive-2012-common-good-award/](#).

²⁴¹“The Mission of the College,” *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2009–2010*, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/courses/catalog/pdf-09-10/03-mission.pdf>.

²⁴²Barry Mills, “Inauguration Address,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, October 27, 2001, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2001/inauguration-address.shtml>.

²⁴³McKeen, “Inaugural Address,” 19.

²⁴⁴*Ibid.*

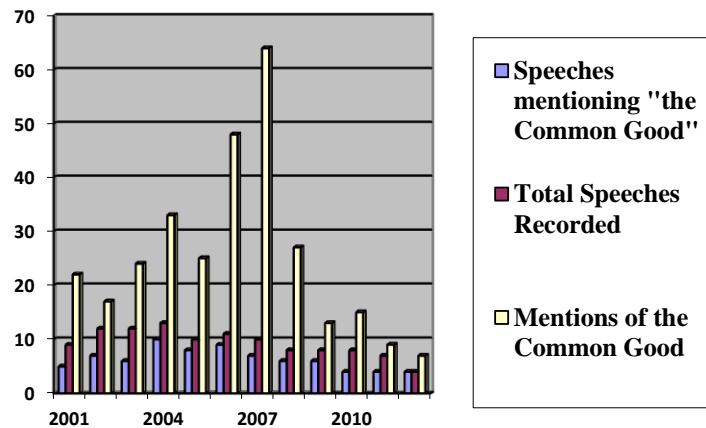
²⁴⁵Mills is quoting from Robert Coles, “Introduction: Stories of Moral Leadership,” *Lives of Moral Leadership: Men and Women Who Have Made a Difference* (New York: Random House, 2001), xxi.

I believe this is a model of leadership—of moral leadership—that Bowdoin must champion. It is not that we will define the precepts of morality. Each of us must do that on his own. But we do have a responsibility to provide knowledge and ideas and powers of reasoning and analysis so that our students may be prepared to determine their own ethical path.²⁴⁶

Mills’s own commitment to the common good as enunciated in this speech is indistinguishable from moral relativism. The phrase has traveled very far from McKeen’s conception.

Mills, however, developed a strong affection for it. It has appeared frequently in his speeches: of 112 published speeches from 2001 to 2012, Mills used “the Common Good” 304 times. It appeared in 68 percent of those speeches, and rose to a crescendo of sixty-four times in seven out of ten speeches in 2007:

Figure 38: Mentions of “the Common Good” in Barry Mills’s Published Speeches, 2001–2012



The ramping up of common good rhetoric in Mills’s 2006 and 2007 speeches was connected with his enthusiastic advocacy for Bowdoin’s attention to global warming, sustainability, and the opening of the Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good. Mills signed the American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment in May 2007, wedding Bowdoin to the belief that a crisis in anthropogenic global warming is an established fact, that the college curriculum and student activities should embody a coordinated response to this fact, and that Bowdoin will achieve “carbon neutrality” by 2020.

In his 2006 baccalaureate speech, Mills stated that Bowdoin must have “enduring values and principles that are right and proper for us to be committed to as a college, principles that are common to us all, if there is to be a common good.” The principle and enduring value that Mills

²⁴⁶Mills, “Inauguration Address,” October 27, 2001.

had in mind was conservation of “the environment and responsible management of natural resources.”²⁴⁷ It is worth noting the contrast between Mills’s 2001 inaugural speech in which the common good is to be interpreted by each student according to his own conscience and the 2006 identification of the common good with a particular social and political program.

Mills has continued to employ both meanings, one moment urging students to find their own ethical paths and the next moment providing exact coordinates and a detailed itinerary. In his 2007 convocation speech, Mills doubled back on his 2006 pronouncement identifying the common good with environmental activism:

From my perspective, our history shows that Bowdoin’s commitment to the common good is much too broad to be attached to or focused on a single issue, even vitally important substantive issues like these. Rather, I believe our commitment to the common good is essentially about our shared values—the “common” part of the common good.²⁴⁸

The “substantive issues” he referred to were financial aid to support racial minority students; community service by students, faculty, and staff; the college’s public pronouncements on ethical issues such as its statement opposing genocide in Darfur; and “concern about climate change.”

Like Bowdoin’s condemnation of genocide in Darfur, Mills has made similar public statements on ethical issues of public concern and controversy. In these cases, his statements were made to sway student opinion toward his position. On October 8, 2005, for example, the *Bowdoin Orient* published a letter to the editor in which Mills encouraged students to “vote ‘no’” on the Maine Sexual Orientation Initiative, which would prohibit employers from denying someone employment based on their sexual lifestyle. For Mills, a “no vote”

extends equal rights to all of our citizens. By granting equal access to education, housing, and jobs, Maine makes a statement to the world that we believe in the founding principles of this nation and that we are not willing to abide prejudice, hatred, and fear.²⁴⁹

Mills found the common good to be a capacious concept. At an October 6, 2008, regular meeting of the faculty, Mills explained:

My view of the common good is to provide access to Bowdoin, and the important thing is to maximize the funds given to the endowment.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷Barry Mills, “Baccalaureate ’06,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, May 27, 2006, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2006/baccalaureate-06.shtml>.

²⁴⁸Barry Mills, “Convocation ’07,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, August 29, 2007, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2007/convocation-07.shtml>.

²⁴⁹Barry Mills, “President Mills: Vote ‘No’ on Question 1,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 28, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1272>.

²⁵⁰Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, October 6, 2008, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

On November 7, 2009, at the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the Russwurm House—built in honor of Bowdoin’s first black graduate, John Brown Russwurm, Class of 1826—Mills declared:

Let me say squarely that our history has been less than proud over the years when we failed to live up to our commitment to the Common Good by opening the doors of this great College to students who deserved to be here, or when we opened the doors but failed to be hospitable to black, Latino, Asian, Native American, Jewish, or poor students, or to those who were just different from the College’s traditional students.²⁵¹

And in his reunion convocation address on June 5, 2010, Mills called building Bowdoin’s financial aid to allow for increased access “the most important imperative for this College,” adding:

We must do all we can at this point in our history to ensure that we are the place that creates dramatic opportunity for all—the most meaningful and complete definition of the common good.²⁵²

The word “access” is a term of art referring both to racial preferences in admissions for minority students and to financial aid for students who could not afford Bowdoin’s skyrocketing tuition. Mills wrote in the April 2, 2012, *Bowdoin Daily Sun*:

As an institution committed to the common good, it is our responsibility to recognize that talent does not correlate with wealth, and we should seek to admit students from the poorest parts of America and from the middle class to ensure opportunity regardless of class or position.²⁵³

The Goodness of Financial Aid

Mills’s repeated statements that Bowdoin had historically closed itself to “the poorest parts of America” are at odds with its actual history. During the college’s first half-century, more than half of its enrolled students were impoverished and were able to attend because the college offered scholarships and made other arrangements to help students support themselves. Bowdoin did this without a functioning endowment—which, as we have previously noted, reached \$904,215,000 during the fiscal year ending in June 2011—and with slim resources of its own. For example, relying on documents in the Bowdoin archive, historian David Allmendinger writes that Bowdoin in 1829 had 114 students, 64 of whom applied for charity funds and/or taught school seasonally to cover their tuition. Twenty-eight of these students—a quarter of the

²⁵¹Barry Mills, “40th Anniversary of the Russwurm Center Celebration,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, November 7, 2009, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2009/russwurm-celebration.shtml>.

²⁵²Barry Mills, “The Most Important Imperative for Bowdoin College,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, June 5, 2010, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2011/06/the-most-important-imperitive-for-bowdoin-college/>.

²⁵³Barry Mills, “Admissions and the Growing Demand for a Bowdoin Degree,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, April 2, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2012/04/barry-mills-admissions-and-the-growing-demand-for-a-bowdoin-degree/>.

enrollment—were “totally indigent in the sense that they received no material support from their families, but relied solely upon charity funds, tuition grants, and their own income from teaching.”²⁵⁴

We don’t have comparable figures for other eras in Bowdoin’s long history, but numerous references to financial aid and college scholarships indicate that over the years Bowdoin supported substantial numbers of students who could not afford the college’s tuition. This varied from era to era. In 1847, a supporter of the college donated an endowment of \$6,000, the income from which was to support “worthy and needy students.”²⁵⁵ For the next two decades, Bowdoin received no additional endowments for scholarships and the college’s support for impoverished students may have fallen off. In the late 1860s, President Samuel Harris, concerned about the situation, asked his boards to increase funds for student scholarships, and in 1870 the boards authorized the faculty to remit part of the tuition for *five* students and to remit the entire tuition “in extreme cases.”

Joshua Chamberlain, who became president in 1871, generally disapproved of scholarships, which he characterized as “an electioneering fund to overbid other colleges” for worthy students. But according to the historian Louis C. Hatch, Chamberlain soon changed his mind. In 1874, the board authorized new scholarships and the college began receiving additional endowment funds for this purpose. In 1889, Bowdoin increased the number of scholarships to ten. In 1891 Bowdoin received a “large bequest,” and President Hyde directed that the income from this would go towards twelve new scholarships of \$200 per year.²⁵⁶

Presidents Chamberlain (1871–1883), Hyde (1885–1917), and Sills (1918–1952) opposed giving scholarships to students who hadn’t proved themselves academically, but Bowdoin retained the idea that it was a college for good students regardless of their financial means. In response to the 1891 gift, Hyde wrote:

²⁵⁴Allmendinger, *Paupers and Scholars*, 12. Here is the citation in context:

At Bowdoin College in 1829 and 1830, a rare combination of complete lists of its schoolkeepers and charity students has survived, making it possible to analyze the entire student body of this institution for these years in terms of student income. More than half of Bowdoin’s 114 students in 1829 were poor—sixty-four of them had to teach school or apply for charity funds to cover tuition and other expenses. The list of schoolkeepers shows that about one-third (forty-five students) kept school to help support themselves. The list of students who received grants from college-administered tuition funds also contains the names of about one-third (forty-three students) of the Bowdoin enrollment. These students had to produce documentary evidence of poverty before they could receive grants. A third list shows that six students received aid from American Education Society, a Boston institution organized in 1815 to help indigent young men prepare for the ministry. The names of twenty-eight students—about one-fourth of those enrolled—appeared more than once on the Bowdoin poverty lists; these students must have been totally indigent in the sense that they received no material support from their families, but relied solely on charity funds, tuition grants, and their own income from teaching. In the early nineteenth century, these sources together could have supported a student who was on his own and without family aid. And what has happening at Bowdoin was happening at the other provincial colleges, too.

Allmendinger cites the passage above on page 24: “‘Record of Proceedings of Committee on Applications for benefit of grant by General Court of Massachusetts to Bowdoin College,’ February 12, 1830, and June 5, 1830, Bowdoin College Special Collections, Brunswick, Maine; ‘Record of Executive Government, 1825–1848,’ Fall 1829 and November 1830, Bowdoin Collections; ‘A.E.S. Records & Monthly Concert, Bowdoin College,’ list of names following the constitution, Bowdoin Collections.”

²⁵⁵Louis C. Hatch, *The History of Bowdoin College* (Portland, ME: Loring, Short & Harmon, 1927), 230.

²⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 230–32.

It is not desirable to make Bowdoin College a place where education is given away to every one who applies for it. It is highly desirable to make Bowdoin College a place where any boy, who combines good natural ability, high moral purpose and willingness to work shall have an opportunity to earn an education for himself under circumstances which will neither break down his health nor impair the value of the education he obtains.²⁵⁷

Sills, then dean of the college, echoed this statement in 1913:

[I]f we were to promise aid in advance to some, then others who had not exacted such a promise in advance would be shut out of aid which they might deserve much more than the ones to whom it had been promised in advance.”²⁵⁸

By 1927, “nearly one half” the students received college financial aid.²⁵⁹ In the 1930s, Sills finally abandoned the prohibition on “prematriculation awards,” thus allowing students to begin their studies at Bowdoin scholarships in hand.

According to the 1964–1965 *Bowdoin College Bulletin*, about a third of students were receiving financial aid from the college in the form of grants, and many more were given “long-term loans” totaling over \$100,000.²⁶⁰ Likewise, the 1974–1975 *Bowdoin College Catalogue* records that Bowdoin that year awarded approximately \$880,000 in grants to about 40 percent of the students, and also loaned students “more than \$250,000” per year.²⁶¹ The 1983–1984 *Catalogue* updates these figures to \$2,693,000 in grants to 36 percent of the student body, and \$300,000 in loans.²⁶² The 1993–1994 *Catalogue* brings these amounts to \$6,350,000 in grants to 40 percent of the student body, and \$1,400,000 in loans.²⁶³ According to the Common Data Set provided by Bowdoin’s Office of Institutional Research, in 2001–2002, the college distributed \$11,981,245 in “need-based” grants and students received need-based “self-help” (i.e., loans) of \$3,167,654.²⁶⁴ In 2011–2012, Bowdoin awarded \$30,541,735 in student grants and students received \$1,271,236 in “self-help.”

²⁵⁷Ibid., 232.

²⁵⁸Brown, *Sills of Bowdoin*, 109.

²⁵⁹Ibid., 238.

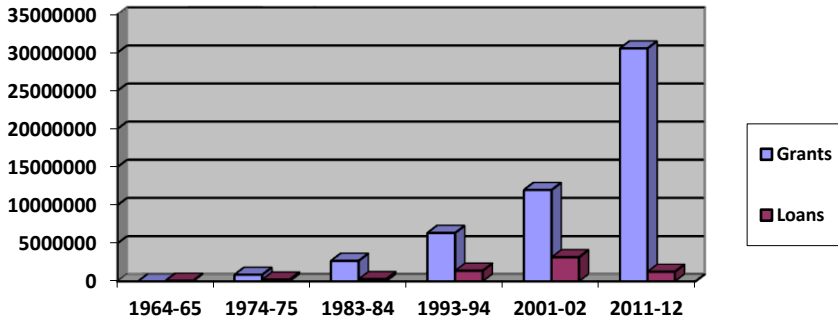
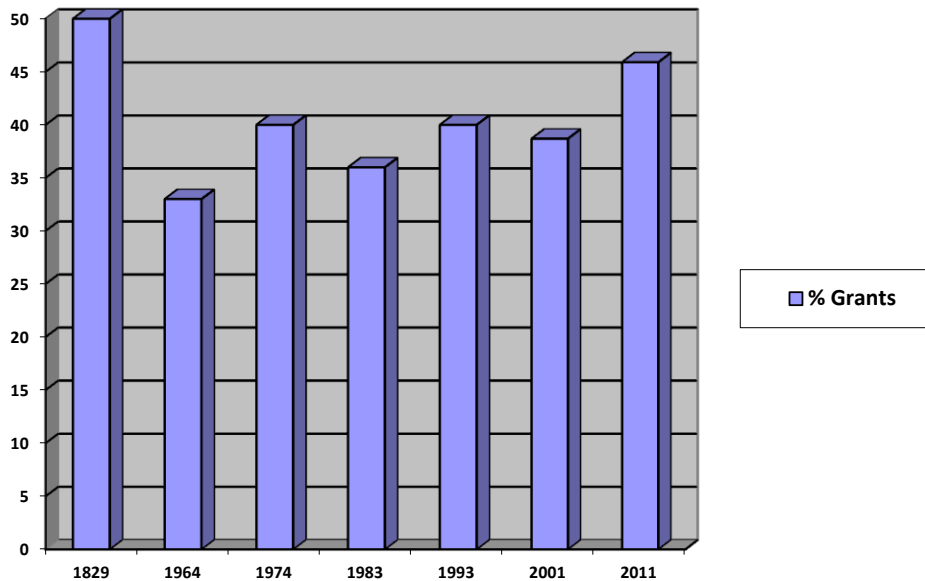
²⁶⁰*Bowdoin College Bulletin 1964–1965*, 50–51.

²⁶¹*Bowdoin College Catalogue 1974–1975*, 50.

²⁶²*Bowdoin College Catalogue 1983–1984*, 61.

²⁶³*Bowdoin College Catalogue 1993–1994*, 19.

²⁶⁴“Common Data Set 2001–2002,” Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, Facts & Figures, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/images/cds2001-02.pdf>.

Figure 39: Bowdoin Grants and Loans to Students, Selected Years, 1964–2011**Figure 40: Percentage of Students Receiving College Grants, Selected Years, 1829–2011**

Thus Bowdoin throughout its history has devoted some of its resources—substantial at times—to ensuring “access” for students who had limited financial means. Bowdoin during its first half-century was devoted to this cause, and even during periods of financial exigency for the college, it has held fast to the principle. President Mills errs when he depicts Bowdoin as having scanted the needs of worthy but financially disadvantaged students. When he said of Bowdoin that “our history has been less than proud when we failed to live up to our commitment to the Common Good by opening the doors of this great College to students who deserved to be here,” he gave surprisingly little credit to the contributions and sacrifices of his predecessors.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵Mills’s statements on Bowdoin’s history of financial aid to students have varied. In his October 27, 2001, inauguration address, Mills praised past practices: “Bowdoin has been need blind for a long time now, admitting students on the basis of their ability, not on their ability to pay. We meet the full calculated need of students and commit to do so for all four years....So for Bowdoin, the challenge is to continue to expand our

The Goodness of Fund-Raising

Mills has created a firm link between the idea of the common good and his ideas about how best to expand “access” to Bowdoin and the college’s affordability. In this vein, he has spoken frequently about the need to increase Bowdoin’s endowment. Spending more money, of course, requires raising more money. In his usage, “the Common Good” stands for both the altruistic end of giving more scholarships and the importance of raising the funds for their own sake.

Mills advanced this blend of financial aid and the common good with a decision to adopt a “no-loan” financial aid policy. In a January 18, 2008, letter to “Members of the Bowdoin Community,” Mills announced that Bowdoin would “eliminate loans for all new and current students receiving financial aid, replacing those loans with grants,” and cited the need “to ensure access and opportunity” as the reason for the decision. He characterized this step as “the most important imperative for this College,” and justified it as part of Bowdoin’s devotion “to the common good.”²⁶⁶ Likewise, in a February 2010 essay in the *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, Mills commented on the decisions by both Williams College and Dartmouth to suspend their no-loan financial aid policies—decisions made in response to the financial worry and restraints created by the deepening 2008 economic recession. Mills remained steadfast:

The question for us given these economic times is how we take whatever steps are necessary to preserve access to Bowdoin for qualified students regardless of their financial means. This is the essence of our commitment to the common good and should be among our most important priorities.²⁶⁷

After launching his Climate Commitment activism in 2007, Mills increasingly deployed the common good as justification for student financial aid to create “opportunity for all,” but he didn’t entirely drop the earlier theme. On the occasion of Bowdoin’s October 14, 2011, release of the update to its Carbon Neutrality Plan, for example, Mills wrote in a letter to students, faculty, and staff:

capacity to attract the best students and to support those with need.” Barry Mills, “Inauguration Address,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, October 27, 2001, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2001/inauguration-address.shtml>. In his June 6, 2010, reunion convocation, however, Mills found fault with those practices and compared them unfavorably with his own initiatives: “But candidly, in 2001 we were substantially undercapitalized for financial aid and our efforts over the recent past have placed us on the right trajectory.” Barry Mills, “President Mills Urges Alumni to Support Financial Aid,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, June 6, 2010, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2010/06/president-mills-urges-alumni-to-support-financial-aid/>. This quoted sentence refers first to all students who “deserved to be here,” and then separately to racial minorities. See, Mills, “40th Anniversary of the Russwurm Center Celebration.”

²⁶⁶Barry Mills, “Message on the Elimination of Student Loans,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, January 18, 2008, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/letters/2008/message-elimination-loans.shtml>.

²⁶⁷Barry Mills, “Barry Mills on No-Loans,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, February 23, 2010, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2010/02/barry-mills-on-no-loans/>.

Bowdoin is an institution and a community dedicated from its founding to serving the Common Good, and there is no doubt that preservation of our environment falls within this historic charge.²⁶⁸

The Common Good in Common Usage

Mills has been an engine of “Common Good” rhetoric, but he has not been alone in the resuscitation of the term. Bowdoin’s *Faculty Handbook 2011–2012*, for example, includes the Environmental Mission Statement, drafted in 2009, which explains:

The Bowdoin College community—being mindful of our use of the earth’s natural resources, our impact on the environment of coastal Maine, and our responsibilities as members of a leading liberal arts college dedicated to serving *the common good*—recommit ourselves to environmental awareness and responsibility, and to actions that promote sustainability on campus and in the lives of our graduates.²⁶⁹ (emphasis added)

The faculty, acting in formal session on March 7, 2011, found it important while condemning “recent incidents of hate and bias” to explain that “we are committed to acting in a meaningful way for the *common good* of the Bowdoin community” (emphasis added); the meeting’s minutes indicate: “Applause followed.”²⁷⁰

Some of Bowdoin’s academic courses focus on the common good. There is, for example, Dance 250, “Theater, Dance, and the Common Good,” the course description of which explains the choreography of community building:

Theater and dance have a long history of political engagement, social intervention, and community building. Examines the historical precedents for today’s “applied” theater and dance practice, including Piscator, Brecht, Boal, Cornerstone Theatre, Judson Dance Theatre, and Yvonne Rainer. Significant time also spent working with local agencies and institutions to create community-based performances addressing social issues such as homelessness, poverty, prejudice, and the environment, among others.²⁷¹

Charles Dorn, whose essay dealing in part with McKeen’s legacy is quoted above, also teaches a course on the common good, EDUC310, “The Civic Functions of Higher Education.” The course description covers the same ground as the essay:

What does it mean for an institution of higher education to act in the public interest? How have interpretations of higher education’s public service role changed throughout history?

²⁶⁸“Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Update,” Bowdoin College, Sustainability, Carbon Neutrality, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/carbon-neutrality/index.shtml>.

²⁶⁹*Faculty Handbook 2011–2012*, Bowdoin College, 90, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/forms-policies/policies/pdf/11-12FacultyHandbook.pdf>.

²⁷⁰Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, March 7, 2011, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

²⁷¹*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2011–2012*, 269.

In what ways might a college, such as Bowdoin, fulfill its institutional commitment to promote the “common good”? Examines the civic functions adopted by and ascribed to institutions of higher education in America, from the seventeenth century to the present.²⁷²

Dorn’s essay, “From ‘Liberal Professions’ to ‘Lucrative Professions’: Bowdoin College, Stanford University, and the Civic Functions of Higher Education,” is actually his own call for an updated notion of how colleges should serve the public good. Dorn’s views are fairly well aligned with those of Mills: he inveighs against “a social ethos of private advantage, which defines personal success solely in terms of material wealth” and against “higher education as a consumer good,” and ranges himself among those who support a more public-spirited form of education—one that includes “civic engagement, including community-based research, service-learning programs, volunteer opportunities, and college and universities behaving as responsible ‘institutional citizens’ within their locales.”²⁷³

The dance and the civic functions courses show that the common good lives on as more than administrative rhetoric. It conveys, at least to some students and faculty, a moral earnestness and an idea of educational purpose larger than self-advancement. These meanings are conveyed in other contexts as well.

In fall 2007, Bowdoin opened the Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good, under the direction of Susan Dorn, Prof. Dorn’s wife. Its mission is to provide “opportunities for students to discover the ways in which their talents, passions and academic pursuits can be used for the benefit of society through public engagement.”²⁷⁴ Practically speaking, it serves much the same function as a bulletin board: it advertises opportunities to volunteer. Of course, the McKeen Center aims higher and has ancillary programs such as sponsored lectures. The Bowdoin College *Catalogue* phrases this enterprise in lofty terms:

[The] McKeen Center supports work that takes place across the campus, in local communities, and at selected locations around the world. The Center assists student-led volunteer organizations that provide service to the local community through activities such as mentoring, tutoring, visiting with senior citizens, serving meals at the local homeless shelter, and working with immigrant populations in nearby Portland. Fostering student initiative and leadership, the Center provides opportunities for students to propose and lead alternative spring break trips that connect their peers with community organizations to address public issues in places ranging from Mississippi and Washington, D.C., to Guatemala and Peru. The McKeen Center also encourages students

²⁷²Ibid., 114.

²⁷³Dorn, “From ‘Liberal Professions’ to ‘Lucrative Professions,’” 1592, 1570.

²⁷⁴“Mission,” Bowdoin College, Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good, About, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/mckeen-center/about/index.shtml>.

to reflect upon their public engagement and connect these experiences to curricular and vocational interests.²⁷⁵

The center bears McKeen's name but seems mostly to carry forward Charles Dorn's vision of public service. Of particular interest, however, is a series of center-sponsored lectures and symposia called "Seeking the Common Good" that focus for an entire semester on a single topic. Some recent "Seeking the Common Good" themes: Fall 2008, "environmentally endangered landscapes"; Spring 2009, "unequal access to health care resources"; Fall 2009, "empowering through policy"; Spring 2010, how literature can be an "inspiration for and reflection on effecting change"; Fall 2010, "ACTivism: Your Cause. Your Community. Your World"; Spring 2011, "public health issues"; and Fall 2011, "the implications of a decade of war on [Afghanistan]."²⁷⁶ The center has also assumed responsibility for a pre-center event called Common Good Day, in which Bowdoin students fan out around the town of Brunswick, Maine, to perform altruistic deeds.²⁷⁷ Faculty members are also appointed to the McKeen Center.

Emphasizing the Common

"The Common Good" is a key concept at Bowdoin College in the sense that it is heavily used as a justification for current policies, serves as rhetorical leverage in debate, and is quoted in the original to give historical weight to Bowdoin. Yet the term as it is used today sometimes seems little more than an empty vessel into which President Mills and others pour the ideas they wish to advance. Does this term serve only as an opportunistic appropriation of a bit of Bowdoin's past? A 2011 talk given by the former dean for academic affairs throws some light on this.

Craig McEwen was Bowdoin's dean for academic affairs from 1999 to 2006. Appointed to the faculty of the sociology department in 1975, McEwen held several administrative appointments beginning in 1985. Among his other roles, he served as acting director of Africana studies and was chairman of the sociology and anthropology department four times. After his term as dean, McEwen returned to the sociology department until his retirement in 2012. He was the senior faculty member associated with the McKeen Center from 2007 to 2012.²⁷⁸

McEwen was a powerful figure at Bowdoin for several decades.²⁷⁹ He had a hand in shaping many of the policies we have discussed. As dean, he chaired the crucial Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee from 1999 to 2006, where he was a driving force behind the 2004

²⁷⁵*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 311.

²⁷⁶Each of the Seeking the Common Good Series can be found in the "Annual Archives of Common Good Activity," Bowdoin College, Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/mckeen-center/activity/2012/index.shtml>.

²⁷⁷"Common Good Day 2012: Thank You, Volunteers!" Bowdoin College, Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/mckeen-center/activity/2012/common-good-day-2012-thank-you.-volunteers.shtml>.

²⁷⁸"McEwen Takes Uncommon Approach to the Common Good," Bowdoin College, Academic Spotlight, February 23, 2011, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1academicnews/008241.shtml>.

²⁷⁹Bowdoin's 2009 990 Income Tax Form listed McEwen as the college's second-highest-paid faculty member.

effort to update Bowdoin's distribution requirements. At the May 10, 2004, regular meeting of the faculty, President Mills thanked McEwen for "leading the whole process on curriculum change"; the minutes record that the faculty responded with "thunderous applause."²⁸⁰

By his own account, McEwen helped to draft "A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College," Bowdoin's 2004 canonical statement explaining its latter-day interpretation of liberal arts education.²⁸¹ That document cites "the Common Good" and builds on the idea in three passages:

1. Since its opening in 1802, Bowdoin has understood the obligation to direct liberal education toward the common good. In the twenty-first century, that obligation is stronger than ever. The challenge of defining a "common good" and acting on it is highlighted, however, in an interconnected world of widely varied cultures, interests, resources, and power. To prepare students for this complexity, a liberal education must teach about differences across cultures and within societies. At the same time, it should help students understand and respect the values and implications of a shared natural world and human heritage. By doing so, a liberal education will challenge students to appreciate and contend with diversity and the conflicts inherent in differing experiences, perspectives, and values at the same time that they find ways to contribute to the common project of living together in the world.
2. A student in a residential liberal arts college is removed from many of the immediate responsibilities of daily adult life, making the four years of education extraordinarily privileged ones. Such an education, however, must engage that world—both contemporary and historical, both local and global. This engagement comes through individual and group research, service learning, volunteer activities, summer internships, off-campus study, and more.
3. Graduates should thus have the ability to engage competing views critically, to make principled judgments that inform their practice, and to work effectively with others as informed citizens committed to constructing a just and sustainable world.²⁸²

²⁸⁰Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 10, 2004, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

²⁸¹McEwen may have been the primary author and is the sole author listed on all successive drafts, but he shares official authorship with many others including President Barry Mills. The February 26, 2004, CEP document, "Curriculum for the First Two Years: A Report and Proposal for Discussion," lists the authors of "A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College":

An earlier draft of this statement was circulated to the Faculty in May 2002 by the CEP of that year (Richard Broene, Jorunn Buckley, Steve Cerf, Ta Herrera, Matthew Killough, Janet Martin, Craig McEwen, Barry Mills, Jed Atkins '04, Sharon Shin '04) and was reviewed and revised by the summer working group of 2003 (Sara Dickey, Paul Franco, Nancy Jennings, Matthew Killough, Craig McEwen, Seth Ramus, John Turner, William Watterson, Allen Wells) as well as this year's CEP.

The 2004 CEP included: Joanna Bosses, Steve Cerf, Hadley Horch, Sue Kin '05, Colin LeCroy '04, Craig McEwen, Barry Mills, Nancy Riley, Rosemary Roberts, Riquelmy Sosa '05, and Dov Waxman. "Curriculum for the First Two Years: A Report and Proposal for Discussion," Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee, Bowdoin College, February 26, 2004, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

²⁸²"Report of the CEP and Motions for Action," Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee, Bowdoin College, March 31, 2004, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

The second excerpt refers to the type of civic-minded education later called for by Dorn and is embodied in the Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good. The third excerpt predates and predicts Bowdoin's most significant sustainability efforts. But the first excerpt, which explicitly cites the "common good," is a meandering effusion on the topic of "diversity." It speaks of challenges, complexity, contention, and conflict "inherent in differing experiences, perspectives, and values," but offers no specific predicate.

McEwen himself acknowledged this in a recorded talk he gave in 2011, "Stories and the Common Good."²⁸³ He began the talk by identifying student ennui over the college's ceaseless evocation of the common good:

I know from focus groups run at the McKeen Center last year, that many students at Bowdoin are tired of hearing the "Common Good" invoked, wonder about what it means—if anything—and are skeptical of the college's commitment as anything more than lip service.²⁸⁴

McEwen characterized his remarks as a response to this fatigue and the skepticism of the students, whom he exhorted to "make your own sense of the common good as a guide to your lives and to your education."²⁸⁵ He described this response as "a quest for meaning in the idea of the common good," and an attempt "to figure out how if at all we put that into practice at Bowdoin."²⁸⁶

McEwen began his quest "for the meaning" of the common good by citing the famous passage from McKeen's 1802 inaugural address and professing that he didn't really know what it meant. Nonetheless, he confessed, he had used it in drafting "A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College"—which, he reminded the audience, "I helped to write."²⁸⁷ He explained that "A Liberal Education" had sidestepped the troublesome side of "the Common Good" by treating it as a "challenge" instead of a term with a clear meaning. He reflected, "we already knew it was hard." And continued:

I also confess that at the McKeen Center we have taken on this agnostic view, because we are acutely aware of the challenge of definition. Instead we have said repeatedly that our job is to promote discussion of the concept so students can come to their own understandings.²⁸⁸

²⁸³See, "McEwen Takes Uncommon Approach to the Common Good," <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1academicnews/008241.shtml>.

²⁸⁴Craig McEwen, "Stories and the Common Good," Karofsky Faculty Encore Lecture, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME, recorded January 28, 2011, 6:04, podcast audio, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/podcasts/#commonhour/>.

²⁸⁵Ibid., 6:39.

²⁸⁶Ibid., 5:21.

²⁸⁷Ibid., 8:39.

²⁸⁸Ibid., 9:20.

McEwen offered the Seeking the Common Good Series as an explicit example of this “agnostic view”:

We have with deliberate ambiguity and double entendre labeled an annual series of events that we help to co-sponsor “*Seeking the Common Good.*” That series encompasses the search for its meaning, and the varied efforts of students, faculty, alumni, and others of the world to translate their own visions of the common good into practice. (emphasis in original)²⁸⁹

The statement’s agnostic view, which is shared by the McKeen Center, provides the grounds for students, faculty, staff, and alumni to define their own goods and values. Here McEwen echoed the relativism that we heard first from President Mills in his inaugural address. McEwen concluded from this that neither the *Bowdoin College Catalogue* nor the McKeen Center were helpful in his quest to define the common good.

McEwen tried looking back in history at the context of McKeen’s original statement, but he deemed that too a failure because “times have changed, and those phrases, ‘common’ or ‘public good,’ have gone out of our regular vocabularies.”²⁹⁰ He then spoke of his attempt to “Google” the phrase, which, for a number of reasons, he ultimately considered fruitless. This drove him to conclude:

“[D]oesn’t the ‘Good’ depend on who the good is for?” I wondered. “Might it be arrogant if I tried to define ‘the Good’ for others?” “Aha,” I thought, “Maybe I should start not with ‘the Good’ but with ‘the who’ it might be for.” So I began thinking about the first part of the phrase: ‘Common.’”²⁹¹

From this point, McEwen descended further and further into philosophical woolgathering. He considered and rejected the “biosphere as our indivisible community” because it is “a bit naïve and inconsistent with what we know of a world torn by conflict among groups.”²⁹² He found more to be mined from Richard Rorty’s pragmatism, which acknowledges that the “solidarity of one group often is built out of antipathy of another group.” The dialectic of “us” versus “them” opened the door for McEwen to expound upon the “huge and consequential differences in social and cultural capital,” between the poor (“them”) and “more privileged Americans.” He recognized that seeking the “common” in the Common Good runs into a profound obstacle: “because we keep running into differences that separate us, rather than unite us.”²⁹³

Thus the common good became in McEwen’s exegesis the designation for a seemingly unsolvable problem. Bowdoin needs to raise up social differences in the name of the Common

²⁸⁹Ibid., 9:40.

²⁹⁰Ibid., 12:04.

²⁹¹Ibid., 16:01.

²⁹²Ibid., 17:52.

²⁹³Ibid., 23:33.

Good but social differences inherently hinder the common good by aggravating group antagonisms. He used the stronger word “antipathy.”

McEwen, however, didn’t despair. He shared with Rorty the hope of “moral progress” toward “greater human solidarity,” in which tribal and other “differences” will become “unimportant when compared with similarities.” To this end, he extolled Bowdoin’s commitment to “diversity,” and the paradox that by multiplying “differences” and emphasizing divisiveness and group grievance, “greater human solidarity” will somehow appear:

For Rorty that’s a moral goal. I think that it’s also an educational goal, and one that Bowdoin has implicitly embraced.²⁹⁴

McEwen then began explicitly to draw the connection between diversity, the common good, and Bowdoin’s curriculum. He cited “A Liberal Education” and the refiguring of the distribution requirements to include the diversity-by-another-name “Exploring Social Differences” requirement, which serves a moral and psychological purpose more than an intellectual one:

Teaching and learning about difference challenges students to examine comfortable—taken for granted—assumptions about the world drawn from their own experiences, to think about and understand worldviews other than the dominant ones that our cultures provide for us, and to widen experiences of the world and the people in it. *That* teaching has the potential to encourage students to think of people wildly different from themselves as included in the range of “us.” Through an education that actively expands conceptions of “us,” the college thus promotes a widened sense of the “Common” Good. (emphasis in original)²⁹⁵

McEwen did not only see this “widened sense of the ‘Common’ Good” in Bowdoin’s rhetoric and distribution requirements, he also saw it in the college’s affirmative action practices:

We can also see Bowdoin’s deep commitment to the sense of the Common Good in its extensive and successful efforts to expand the “us” of the Bowdoin community. The commitment is clear in the college’s heavy investment in financial aid and support for diversity along many dimensions.²⁹⁶

This was a direct reference to Mills’s “access” and “no-loan” policy. But this concept of the widened “sense of the ‘Common’ Good” is not only a matter of justice, it also contains what has been called elsewhere a “pedagogy of difference.” McEwen explained:

That is, we at the College believe that students can and do learn much from others whose experiences differ from their own. Expanding the “us” of Bowdoin thus helps members

²⁹⁴Ibid., 24:58.

²⁹⁵Ibid., 26:23.

²⁹⁶Ibid., 27:14.

of the Bowdoin community extend the reach of what we understand as “common” interests, hopes, and desires, and widens the circle of those who we might support in some broader sense of solidarity.²⁹⁷

Though McEwen longed for “solidarity” that transcends group differences, he also feared that, “By widening the ‘Bowdoin us,’ or any ‘us,’ we risk washing away difference.”²⁹⁸ He wanted members of the Bowdoin community “to revel in our oneness,” but at the same time to jubilate in their differences. “This apparent paradox comes home to a diverse Bowdoin.”²⁹⁹

The paradox is irresolvable at the level of practical reason, but McEwen didn’t regard that as a particularly high barrier. Bowdoin could instead provide a “space for students, and faculty, staff to tell and hear personal stories about life experience outside and inside Bowdoin. Indeed stories, it turns out...are an important vehicle for resolving the paradox of seeing and understanding difference within the context of unity.”³⁰⁰ Hence, the title of his lecture, “Stories and the Common Good.” McEwen’s influence on the McKeen Center is apparent in the center’s frequent publication of “stories of the common good,” which highlight and celebrate the public service efforts of members of the Bowdoin community.

The trope of storytelling plays an important role in Bowdoin today, one that we will examine separately.

How Good?

Bowdoin’s contemporary appropriation of the phrase “the Common Good” from President McKeen’s 1802 inaugural address makes a strong claim on the college’s past while sweeping aside nearly everything McKeen meant. McKeen’s idea of the common good was that students who were committed to the pursuit of virtue would mature as Christians who would dedicate their public lives to helping build the state of Maine and the young American nation. Dedication to the common good would counteract the temptation for students to adopt “irreligious and immoral principles,” and to contract “vicious habits.” For McKeen, a college dedicated to the common good would be a college that paid scrupulous attention to maintaining “laws” over student conduct.

Bowdoin today has no real connection to any of these points. The college has long since secularized and dispensed with the Aristotelian idea that cultivating virtue is the central enterprise of higher education. Where McKeen saw the development of good character as an arduous ascent fraught with the dangers of acquiring immoral principles and bad habits, modern Bowdoin treats students as responsible for defining for themselves what principles they care

²⁹⁷Ibid., 27:43.

²⁹⁸Ibid., 28:27.

²⁹⁹Ibid., 29:14.

³⁰⁰Ibid., 30:15.

about and whatever habits they choose to develop.³⁰¹ Where McKeen saw the crafting of “laws” as the foundation of the college’s relation to students, Bowdoin today puts the emphasis squarely on student autonomy, and takes a mostly off-shore position on the question of personal virtue—though it is far from neutral on the “values” it hopes students will acquire.

The change in focus from *virtue* to *values* has been widely noted as a characteristic of modern thought, and to mention that transition at Bowdoin from the era of McKeen to the era of Mills is not to make a special case of Bowdoin. As in many things, Bowdoin provides a clear instance of a wider trend. But it is a trend with momentous implications for liberal arts in particular. All forms of higher education are partly about shaping the character, habits, and dispositions of students. The liberal arts college, however, is especially focused on character formation and on placing the student in a community of peers who reinforce one another’s moral and intellectual seriousness.³⁰² Bowdoin has, consequently, devoted considerable effort to reimagining what the “liberal arts” could be in the absence (or the obsolescence) of what had once been the core of the liberal arts tradition.

The reappropriation of “the Common Good” should not be understood as a mere recycling of old words for new purposes. The modern interpretation shares with McKeen’s original some sense that students and the college as a whole owe something important to the world beyond their individual striving for prosperity and advancement. The word “common” resonates more today (as we saw from McEwen’s speech) than the word “good,” but both ideas and their conjunction still exert a powerful hold on the college community as a way of denoting unselfishness, generosity, and a determination to ameliorate the wrongs of the world.

This is a real continuity and gives warrant for President Mills (and President Edwards before him) to draw on McKeen. That said, the discontinuities loom even larger. The common good at Bowdoin today is less a coherent idea about the philosophical orientation of the college than a gesture toward social and political commitments gilded with the moral authority of a vanished past. The common good for McKeen was about shared virtue; the common good for Bowdoin today is about “the search” for shared values. For Mills, the common good is a rubric under which he can extol student autonomy, diversity, access, sustainability, and student participation in those electoral issues that catch his attention. For figures such as Dorn and McEwen, “the Common Good” is a more perplexing term that points to important and wholesome undertakings—public service for Dorn, diversity for McEwen— but they recognize that the phrase, ripped from its original context, has troublesome aspects. For McEwen especially a gulf opens; he recognizes that Bowdoin today has no real grounds to speak of “the Good,” and

³⁰¹“The Social Code describes certain rights and responsibilities of Bowdoin College students. While it imposes no specific morality on students, the College requires certain standards of behavior on and off College premises.” *2012–2013 Bowdoin College Student Handbook*, 9, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook/print-section.shtml>.

³⁰²In his recent book, Andrew Delbanco puts this dynamic at the center of liberal arts education but worries that it is becoming obsolete. “By this I mean that the theme I’ve stressed—college as a community of learning—is, for many students, already an anachronism.” *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 151.

that even the idea of “Common” is vitiated by the college’s apotheosis of the idea of diversity, difference, and group identity.

The Common Good is a key concept at Bowdoin not because it answers the college’s key questions about educational goals but because it names the college’s central perplexity. Bowdoin wants to own its liberal arts tradition while discarding much of what that tradition entails. It also wants to stand for intellectual openness and abundance while upholding some closed, fixed, and rather narrow ideological positions. The redeployment of the common good reaffirms Bowdoin’s identity as a liberal arts institution while covering its retreat from actual liberal arts education. The phrase thus names a discomfort: the Common Good is ill at ease at a college that has elevated student choice to a cardinal principle, made the granting of racial preferences a standard practice in admissions, and turned the pursuit of “difference” into an end in itself.

II. Storytelling

The idea of “storytelling” has gained significant cachet among students, faculty, and administrators at Bowdoin. “Storytelling” does not denote composing literary fiction, although the stories that are told may well involve a great deal of invention. This study has its origins in some Bowdoin storytelling: President Mills’s fanciful account in his 2010 convocation address in which he described his golf outing with Tom Klingenstein. That story, like many others in this genre, was aimed at justifying a political position by framing it in light of personal experience.

Like many colleges, Bowdoin requires applicants to submit a short essay. As noted above, Bowdoin currently instructs students to write 250 words on “intellectual engagement,” “The Common Good,” or “Connection to place” by “reflecting on your own interests and experiences.”³⁰³ This no doubt serves the perfectly ordinary application function of determining whether a student can follow instructions and compose a coherent sequence of grammatical sentences, but it also begins the process of teaching Bowdoin students to think of their developing biographies through the lens of Bowdoin’s own narrative.

Over time, Bowdoin students will discover that the dominant form of “storytelling” at Bowdoin is a kind of polemical memoir, in which the speaker/writer associates himself with one of the several available narratives of social oppression. Generally, storytelling provides an occasion for the individual to define himself in a public forum. The term contains an important ambiguity. On the one hand, storytelling is meant to emphasize the freedom of the individual to define himself regardless of how others see him. On the other, almost all Bowdoin storytelling involves the storyteller fitting his biographical facts to a narrow range of stereotypes. Storytelling might be thought of as a recent secular variant on the old Christian practice of public testimony, in that it, too, involves public affirmations of allegiance to the values of a particular “congregation” and declaration of support for the solidarity of that community.

³⁰³“Bowdoin Supplement to the Common Application for Admission,” Bowdoin College, http://www.bowdoin.edu/admissions/pdf/Bowdoin_Supplement_2012_2013.pdf.

An old feature of undergraduate colleges in the United States was the “Baccalaureate Service,” a religious event focused on a sermon directed to the graduating class a few days before commencement exercises. Some colleges and universities maintain the tradition in its religious form, but others, including Bowdoin, have secularized it. In May 2003, President Mills moved the Bowdoin Baccalaureate Service from First Parish Church, where it had been held since Bowdoin’s founding, to Morrell Gym. He acknowledged, “Originally a religious service appropriately conducted in a religious setting, Baccalaureate at Bowdoin has evolved into an inclusive ceremony of historical reflection and a celebration of the ideals of this great College.”³⁰⁴ The new venue was more fitting with the secularized storytelling that comprised most of this “historical reflection.” In its current format, Bowdoin Baccalaureate includes a speech by Mills, “Readings from Bowdoin’s Past,” by the dean of student affairs, a student address, and a baccalaureate address.³⁰⁵ In 2012 the address was given by Humaira Awais Shahid, a journalist, human rights activist, and Pakistani legislator. Dean Timothy Foster’s “Readings” told the story of Bowdoin’s mascot, the polar bear, linking the creature to Bowdoin graduates, polar explorers Admiral Robert Peary and Admiral Donald B. MacMillan. Of particular interest to us, however, are the student speeches given on these occasions.

The 2012 student address, “Beginning from Home,” was delivered by Tanu Kumar (Class of 2012) and focused on her sense that Bowdoin had become like home to her and that she would miss it. Her talk was one of graceful banality and nostalgia, sentiments in keeping with thousands of other such speeches delivered by graduating students each year around the country. If anything in it stood out as distinctly “Bowdoin” in character, it was Kumar’s attempt to interpret her college experience through the lens of President Hyde’s 1906 “Offer of the College,” which, she said, “promises to allow you ‘to be at home in all lands and all ages,’” and “to carry the keys of the world’s library in our pockets.” Kumar feared the dislocations that lay before her but took solace that she could return to herself “through books.”

There is nothing provocative in Kumar’s storytelling, which is why we present it first. It exemplifies the irenic mode of storytelling at Bowdoin in which students conflate their education with the cumulative events of their lives. This is surely true up to a point, but it quietly turns away from those aspects of learning that are more about mastering a subject than they are exploring the self or claiming an identity. Kumar’s speech is told in an insistent first-person voice, and is thick with the first-person pronoun.³⁰⁶ This mode can readily be turned to a more strident kind of self-assertion.

³⁰⁴Barry Mills, “Baccalaureate ’03,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, May 23, 2003, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2003/baccalaureate-03.shtml>.

³⁰⁵“Baccalaureate,” Bowdoin College, May 25, 2012, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/commencement/archives/pdf/Baccalaureate12.pdf>.

³⁰⁶“I” appears sixty-four times; “me” fifteen times; variations of “you” twenty-four times; “us” eight times; and “we” twenty-two times.

On March 1, 2011, on a white board on a dorm room door of a biracial female student in Coles Tower, a high-rise dormitory, someone scrawled an epithet. As the *Bowdoin Orient* reported it:

The initial message of “I Love Meatless Mondays” was maliciously edited to instead read, “I Love Meatful Mondays! Meatless Mondays Suck!!! F*g N***er.”³⁰⁷

The student complained but the person who scrawled the epithet was never identified. On March 9, 2011, in response to this “bias incident,” several hundred students, with President Mills standing among them, held a rally on the theme “I Am Bowdoin.”³⁰⁸

Some two hundred students taped their mouths shut with duct tape and marched in protest to Smith Union, where standing in a circle around the Sun Seal, one by one the students peeled off their tape to signify that they were reclaiming their voices and shouted their declarations of personal identity and solidarity.

“I am too complicated to describe in one word,” began one student, “and I am Bowdoin.” Another, “I am a woman and a Christian Scientist, and I am Bowdoin.” Another, “I am multiracial, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am statistically not supposed to be here, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am a Muslim woman, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a women’s rugby player, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m in love, and I am Bowdoin.” “I have two passports, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am beautiful, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a feminist, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a Chicana from LA, and I love you, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am 100 percent Columbian, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am someone who cares, and I am Bowdoin.” “I have no idea who the fuck I am yet, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a Christian, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am a black woman and I refuse to be put in whatever box society decides they want to throw me in, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m fighting for change, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am Eskimo, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m black, I’m from the South, and I wear do-rags, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am straight, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am a liberal, vegetarian Catholic, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am proud to be an African-American, a Native-American, and a Caucasian woman and I AM HEARTBROKEN, AND I AM STILL BOWDOIN.” “I’m a middle child, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am me, and I am still Bowdoin.” “I am a naturalized citizen, and I am still Bowdoin.” “I’m an African American New Yorker, and I am Bowdoin.” “I have race, and I am American, and I am still Bowdoin.” “I am fucking fierce, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a Chicana feminist and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a momma’s boy, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a first generation college student, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am Kelly, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am working class, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am from a lower-income class, and I am still Bowdoin.” “I am half-Chinese and half-Jewish, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a single gay dad from Maine, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a trans-feminist Jew, and I am Bowdoin.” This continued for fourteen minutes, until almost all of the participating students made, what President Mills later called in a *Bowdoin*

³⁰⁷Zohran Mamdani, “Bias Incident Strikes 15th Floor of Tower,” *Bowdoin Orient*, March 4, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6192>.

³⁰⁸Zohran Mamdani, “‘I Am Bowdoin’ Promotes Diversity Awareness,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 1, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6250>.

Daily Sun article, “positive expressions of identity.” Then, two students stepped forward and gave a speech that served as the event’s encapsulation and conclusion. Here it is in full:

Female Student 1: “We are here today because we care. Cultures of silence are corrosive and divisive. If even one of us feels unsafe here, our community is compromised. Everyone has a right to feel safe. Everyone has a right to feel at home. Everyone has a right to feel like their voice is being heard.”

Female Student 2: “We are all different. For too long our differences have sat side by side—unembraced. They should be celebrated. They should be accepted. Tolerance is not enough. Everyone matters! Everyone should be heard.”

Female Student 1: “Everyone belongs in this community. In a community everyone cares. We care. Start talking.”

Together: “Start listening...now. I am Bowdoin! I am Bowdoin!”

Crowd Joins: “I am Bowdoin! I am Bowdoin! I am Bowdoin! I am Bowdoin!...”³⁰⁹

President Mills stood in the center of the crowd, clearly pleased. Nearly a month later, he posted a blog entry in the *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, “Demonstrating Community,” praising and describing these self-proclamations as persons identifying “themselves in the most personal and genuine manner.” Mills said he was “moved beyond tears.”³¹⁰

The “storytelling” in “I am Bowdoin” is, of course, minimalist, but the declarations are nonetheless thought of in Bowdoin terms as stories. The incident also illustrates two closely related terms: “voice” and “silence.” The reason that the protesters wore duct tape over their mouths was to illustrate that their “voices” had been “silenced” by the epithet. Peeling off the tape signified “regaining your voice” in the face of bias and oppression. “Talking” and “listening” are the proposed antidotes to “silence.”

The “I Am Bowdoin” rally represents Bowdoin storytelling in its most compressed form. But it is indeed storytelling as described by the former dean for academic affairs, Craig McEwen, in his January 28, 2011 talk, “Stories and the Common Good.” On that occasion, McEwen confessed that the term “the Common Good” didn’t make clear sense to him or to many Bowdoin students but that it did lend itself to a kind of community-building exercise in which individuals would talk about their differences in constructive ways:

[I]ntellectual exchanges [about difference and diversity] need substantial grounding in deeper awareness and understanding of the very human experiences that diversity represents. And I think this means making space for students, and faculty, staff to tell and

³⁰⁹“I Am Bowdoin Demonstration,” Vimeo video by Bowdoin Cable Network of rally at Smith Union, Bowdoin College, March 2011, <http://vimeo.com/22619161>.

³¹⁰ Barry Mills, “Barry Mills: Demonstrating Community,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, May 31, 2011, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2011/03/barry-mills-demonstrating-community/>.

hear personal stories about life experience outside and inside Bowdoin. Indeed stories, it turns out...are an important vehicle for resolving the paradox of seeing and understanding difference within the context of unity.³¹¹

For McEwen, the empathic community is one in which “different” people are the authors of their own stories. In such a community authorship is self-generated, and each author refuses the power to tell the story of “them.” He said:

I think it’s important to ask ourselves about stories—oversimply, whether the stories we hear or read are stories *about* or stories *by*. That is, we need to ask ourselves whose voices are being heard in the story. For to learn about different experience of the world we need to hear unambiguously the voices of those who are situated differently than we are. (emphasis in original)³¹²

McEwen’s emphasis on this kind of storytelling as the key to resolving the tension between diversity-within-community and community-encompassing-diversity turns liberal arts education into an extended exercise in autobiography.

In retrospect, this framing seems much like a script for the “I Am Bowdoin” rally, which consisted entirely of micro-miniature “stories by” Bowdoin students “situating” themselves “differently,” albeit within the established grid of Bowdoin identities. The students speak of themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion, and sexual orientation, and sometimes in terms of political commitment (“liberal,” “feminist”) or emotional state (“in love,” “fucking fierce”), but almost never in terms of their intellectual and disciplinary identities. The one possible exception is a student who declares, “I am an Africana studies and biology major, who fricking loves plants and I am Bowdoin.”

No one declares, “I am a mathematician and I am Bowdoin,” or “I am a classicist and I am Bowdoin.” Nor do students define themselves in terms of personal avocations, e.g., “I love Beethoven’s piano sonatas and I am Bowdoin” or “I am an avid rock climber and I am Bowdoin.” Nor does anyone find his declared identity in literature or philosophy, “I am a rational animal and I am Bowdoin,” “I am a subject, not an object, and I am Bowdoin.”

Those sorts of declarations would be, in the logic of Bowdoin storytelling, radically out of place. The identities that matter are the ones that the college has made salient by its emphasis on a larger narrative of the marginalization of social groups based on stigmatized identity. Bowdoin ostensibly celebrates the freedom of self-definition while simultaneously shrinking the possibilities to a few narrow categories. Students are free to imagine their public identities *within* those categories.

³¹¹McEwen, “Stories and the Common Good,” 29:57.

³¹²Ibid., 42:49.

On June 13, 2012, Bowdoin announced that Phui Yi Kong (Class of 2015) would bring a “unique drama program” to the college: the “Theater of the Oppressed” which in the 2012–2013 academic year would “explore pressing social and political issues.” Kong aimed to raise awareness, through a form of simulated storytelling, of the roles of “oppressed and oppressor.” She explained that one of the goals of the theater was to incorporate student “actors” into a series of staged exercises in which they assumed these roles.

Kong saw oppression in even the most benign interactions. She said, “Oppression can happen anywhere, in any situation.” For instance, in one of the roleplaying scenarios that Kong imagined, actors would pair off, place their open palms against one another, and the “leader” would move his hands while the “follower” mimed the leader’s motions. Kong explained, “It sets up a basic scenario of oppressed and oppressor.”

For Kong, this exercise would enable the actors to gain a fundamental insight, or in Bowdoin parlance, to gain a “raised awareness”:

your body is gathering information, learning how to be in a group, and is aware of other people.³¹³

“Raising awareness” is one of the most familiar tropes of storytelling at Bowdoin and a key tool in almost every social movement, large and small. Raising awareness does not always stick faithfully to McEwen’s bifurcation of “stories about” from “stories by.” Raising awareness often entails a student telling a story as an advocate of the oppressed; the student empathizes with the oppressed who tell their story, in effect, by proxy.

Of course, “Theater of the Oppressed” is a bit unusual. “Awareness” is usually raised by “the oppressed” themselves. Africa Alliance, African American Society, South Asian Society, Asian Students Association, Bowdoin Queer Straight Alliance, Latin American Students Organization, Native American Students Association, Bowdoin Women’s Association, Safe Space, the Undiscussed, V-Day, Bowdoin Men Against Sexual Violence, OUTPeers, Queers & Allies, and many other student groups exist essentially to tell the stories of the oppressed and to foster their solidarity.

Another instance of Bowdoin storytelling is a play, *Perspectives*, written, directed, and acted by Bowdoin students as part of the 2011–2012 New Student Orientation Week at the behest of the Office of Multicultural Student Programs. Written by George Ellzey (Class of 2013), *Perspectives* featured three men and four women representing a variety of races, each wearing a different solid-color T-shirt, clearly meant to exemplify diversity. One by one, the students stepped forward and shouted out various enthusiasms, e.g., “unicycling,” “snow.” The students talked past one another like characters in a Pinter play:

³¹³“Sophomore to Develop ‘Theater of the Oppressed at Bowdoin,’” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, June 13, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2012/06/sophomore-to-develop-theater-of-the-oppressed-at-bowdoin>.

Female wearing blue: I'm inspired to act on the stage; to be myself in another man's shoes.

Male wearing yellow: I'm obsessed with unicycling, pineapple popsicles, and being barefoot.

Female wearing orange: I'm inspired by good music: the Airborne Toxic Event, U2, Mumford and Sons, and the like...

The staggered expostulations are interrupted at several points with songs and dances that illustrate coordinated effort and group solidarity. The play also includes a few interludes in which a character offers a slightly more extended autobiography. An Asian girl in a blue shirt, for example, tells a story about living under parents who stressed "hard work." Her friends briefly sympathize and then return to their lists of favorite things.

The piece was trivial, worth notice only as an illustration that storytelling of this type is often a springboard for vanity and self-absorption. But the play was not offered as a parody of Bowdoin student life. It was offered instead—under the auspices of the Office of Multicultural Student Programs and for an audience of newly arrived freshmen—in the words of the playwright, to "celebrate diversity in the class."³¹⁴

There are, of course, myriad ways in which people tell stories. What is arresting about Bowdoin's "storytelling" is its overwhelmingly first-person character. Bowdoin students are encouraged to think about education less as a matter of coming to understand the world than as a stage on which to enact their lives.

III. Bowdoin

"Bowdoin" itself is one of the key concepts at Bowdoin. When the students in the "I am Bowdoin" protest of March 9, 2011, serially declared that "I am _____, and I am Bowdoin," they drew on a familiar conceit. "Bowdoin" is a collective identity to be claimed and fitted to a wide variety of purposes, useful not least because it is so open-ended.

Self-approbation, of course, is a general rule for colleges and universities, which valorize themselves in many ways. They publish laudatory institutional histories, recall lustrous events at commencement and other ceremonial occasions, celebrate sports victories, erect memorials, and keep up a steady stream of presidential speeches that remind students, faculty, and alumni of the college's particular charms and claims to distinction. Usually all of this involves comparisons, sometimes explicit, but often just implied, to rival colleges.

Bowdoin conforms to this general pattern of self-representation. That is to say the name "Bowdoin" conveys more than a baccalaureate degree-granting institution in Brunswick, Maine. It is also a symbol of collective identity that can be called on for various kinds of duty. Bowdoin

³¹⁴Mariya Ilyas, "Diversity Initiatives Include Index and New O-Week Events," *Bowdoin Orient*, September 9, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6528>.

is a brand that can be marketed to prospective students and possible donors. Bowdoin is an “agent” that acts, as when it buys property or reduces its carbon footprint. Bowdoin denotes a certain kind of experience, perhaps of diversity or community. Bowdoin is a specific place with emotional resonance. And Bowdoin is an idea: the idea, perhaps, of a great liberal arts college, though that is only a rough approximation.

The task of conceptualizing “Bowdoin” falls most of all on its president and different presidents have conceived of Bowdoin in strikingly different ways. On June 27, 2009, in a speech before the Maine Historical Society, President Mills told a story. The recession that began in 2008 had deepened and Mills was worried about what this would mean for Bowdoin. To gain inspiration, Mills “decided to have a look at how Bowdoin was managed during” the “dark days” of the Great Depression.³¹⁵ He opened *Sills of Bowdoin*—the biography of Kenneth Sills, eighth President of Bowdoin College (1918—1952)—by Herbert Ross Brown, Edward Little Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, and found:

As the shadows of the Depression lengthened in the autumn of 1932, Kenneth Sills told alumni that the state of the nation compelled him to think more seriously than ever of the real purpose of the college. “Suppose,” he asked on November 5, “that Bowdoin’s funds were so far reduced that we had to cut out everything that was unessential—what would be left? One can well imagine a college run without administrative officers, a college could certainly be run without a president.... It would still be a college if there were not athletic fields.... When you come right down to the bare necessities of the college you are driven to the conclusion that the college consists of those who teach and those who study together. The essential equipment can be confined to the library and the laboratory, with a few classrooms thrown in for good measure.”³¹⁶

Mills began by agreeing with Sills: “Now, there is no disputing the essence of what Sills was saying. Colleges like Bowdoin—at their core—are about the students, the faculty, and the tools of teaching and learning.”³¹⁷ But his agreement went only so far: “But there was then, and there is today, much more to the residential liberal arts experience.”³¹⁸

Where Sills could envision Bowdoin as a viable institution without administrative officers, or a president, Mills presided over a Bowdoin with a vastly bigger administrative apparatus than Sills could have imagined. Not long after Mills’ speech, Bowdoin reported in *Bowdoin College Economic Impact 2009–2010*, that the college had 382 full-time equivalent administrators, 350 full-time equivalent support staff, 177 full-time faculty, and 40 part-time faculty. The administrator-faculty ratio was 1.76 to 1; the staff-faculty ratio was 1.6 to 1. Taken

³¹⁵Barry Mills, “Maine Historical Society—Brown Library Dedication,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, June 27, 2009, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2009/maine-historical-society.shtml>.

³¹⁶Ibid.

³¹⁷Ibid.

³¹⁸Ibid.

together, the ratio of administrators and staff to faculty was 3.37 to 1.³¹⁹ Bowdoin's staff had been growing at a dizzying rate. Between 1999 and February 2003, for example, the college had added 101 new staff positions.³²⁰ According to Mills, administrative and staff compensation (not including faculty compensation) amounted to 31 percent of cost of attendance. Faculty compensation totaled 18 percent of cost of attendance.³²¹

Sills had dared to imagine a Bowdoin without football. Mills presides over a college with thirty-one varsity sports, including golf, sailing, Nordic skiing, and tennis. These expenses, as Sills recognized, add up, but in Mills's view, to trim Bowdoin's extraordinary costs, even in the midst of a recession, would be to jeopardize something essential—something Mills in his 2010 reunion convocation called “the Bowdoin you admire”:

There are ways to reduce the expense of Bowdoin—but at what cost? We could have larger classes, fewer professors, and fewer course offerings, but that would not be the Bowdoin you admire. We could have fewer sports, less art, less theater, fewer adventures and leadership opportunities in the Outing Club, and fewer extracurricular activities, but that wouldn't be the Bowdoin you admire. We could reduce the opportunities for our students to do research and to study directly with our faculty—but again—that wouldn't be the Bowdoin you admire. We could shrink the activities of the McKeen Center for the Common Good and eliminate support for community service. That wouldn't be the Bowdoin you admire either.³²²

“The Bowdoin you [the alumni] admire” is one of Mills's fund-raising tropes, but it is also among his favorite colorizations of the whole idea of Bowdoin College, which he has expanded far beyond Sills's distillation that “the college consists of those who teach and those who study together.” For Mills, the college consists of a no-amenity-left-behind experience. He also defends this with the phrase that to cut any of the luxuries would result in something that “wouldn't be Bowdoin.”³²³ In Mills's view this isn't about maintaining amenities for their own sake but about maintaining the college's position in a competitive market—something that requires academic excellence *and* a lot of nonacademic attractions.

While Mills speaks with the most authoritative voice on what “Bowdoin” is and is not, he is not alone in supplying content to the concept of the college. The students have a voice as well, and one of the uses of “Bowdoin” most commonly employed by students is in the phrase “the

³¹⁹“Bowdoin College Economic Impact: 2009–2010,” Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME, <https://www.bowdoin.edu/treasurer/pdf/economic-indicators.pdf>.

³²⁰Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, February 3, 2003, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

³²¹Barry Mills, “A Letter to Parents,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, May 17, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2012/05/barry-mills-a-letter-to-parents-2/>.

³²²Barry Mills, “The Most Important Imperative for Bowdoin College,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, June 5, 2011, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2011/06/the-most-important-imperative-for-bowdoin-college/>.

³²³“Video: 2012 Scholarship Appreciation Luncheon—The Full Menu,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, May 18, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2012/05/video-2012-scholarship-appreciation-luncheon-%E2%80%94-the-full-menu/>.

Bowdoin bubble.” This refers to the supposed isolation of the campus from the larger world. The Winter 2012 *Bowdoin Magazine* took the “Bowdoin Bubble” as its cover theme, with a picture of Massachusetts Hall inside a snow globe. The story, “Reflections on the Bowdoin Bubble,” presents pictures of Bowdoin students literally inside or next to giant bubbles, along with brief statements from those students, who seem generally happy with the bubble. Kathryn Woo (Class of 2012), for example, says, “Inside the bubble it’s safe to voice your opinions, venture out of your comfort zone, and be yourself.” Anirudh Sreekrishnan (Class of 2012) effuses, “The ability to interact with so many different people from across the world and with such diverse ideas in such a small place makes living in this small ‘bubble’ worth it.”³²⁴

Bowdoin Magazine is an alumni publication and reliably puts a positive spin on things Bowdoin. Elsewhere the term “Bowdoin Bubble” conveys a sense of disenchantment. Ryan Erskine (Class of 2012), writing in the *Bowdoin Orient*, declared, “A semester abroad offers students real-world experiences that cannot possibly be offered inside the relatively isolated Bowdoin bubble.”³²⁵

IV. Culture

“Culture” is a word that has traveled very far from the days when it meant cultivation of the land: we now say agriculture, much as we say “snail mail.” It has travelled far as well from the days of Matthew Arnold, when the word evoked high attainment in the arts and letters and refinements of civilized thought and manners. Anthropologists began using “culture” in the mid-nineteenth century to refer to the totality of human invention, in the sense that some peoples had attained a great deal of culture, while others only a little. At the end of the nineteenth century, the German-born anthropologist Franz Boas momentously pluralized the English word and gave birth to the idea that different peoples had not different degrees of culture, but whole cultures of their own.

This is the meaning of the word “culture” that prevails today and it is the meaning of the term employed at Bowdoin. When Bowdoin celebrates cultural diversity, it is celebrating the plurality of cultures in the Boasian sense of different and irreconcilable value systems that have to be taken and understood on their own terms. This is the meaning of the word on display in “The Mission of the College,” which explains that Bowdoin creates room for students to exercise “free individual choice”—but

the College also causes these decisions to occur in a context of density and variety—of ideas, artistic expression, and exposure to other cultures and other races—so that personal identity will not become an illusion of centrality.³²⁶

³²⁴“Reflections on the Bowdoin Bubble,” *Bowdoin Magazine* 83, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 22, 26.

³²⁵Ryan Erskine, “Column on ‘Studying Abroad’ Is Inaccurate,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, February 11, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6046>.

³²⁶“The Mission of the College,” *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2009–2010*, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/courses/catalog/pdf-09-10/03-mission.pdf>.

Even so, the older meaning of the word lingers in the shadow of the newer meaning. “Culture” is still a good thing, worth acquiring, not just an object of study. Judah Isseroff (Class of 2013), for example, reminded his fellow students that a reliable way to select courses during registration is to scrutinize their required texts and to choose courses with reading lists that seem “imposing, traditionalist or canonical.” For Isseroff, in authors like “Plato, or Melville, or Rousseau... we encounter genius of some sort. We discover, glistening on the pages of these books, a sort of absolute, universal good.”³²⁷

Sometimes this valuation is crosscut by a countervailing sense that culture can also be stifling and that one purpose of education is to escape its trammels. Writing in the *Bowdoin Orient*, Alanna Beroiza (Class of 2009) observed, “[I]n the four years that I’ve identified myself outside the bounds of heterosexuality, at school, at home, and abroad, I have experienced forms of anti-LGBT sentiment which, though less overt, occur rather consistently on campus, off campus, and in Western culture in general.”³²⁸ One of the student leaders of the May 2011 “I Am Bowdoin” rally likewise declared, “Cultures of silence are corrosive and divisive.”³²⁹

V. Difference

“Difference” at Bowdoin usually refers to social and cultural difference. The categories enunciated by students at the “I Am Bowdoin” rally name differences along these lines: Muslim woman; feminist; Chicana; Christian; Eskimo; straight; liberal, vegetarian Catholic; African-American; naturalized citizen; momma’s boy; first-generation college student; working-class; half-Chinese and half-Jewish; single gay dad, etc.

But “difference” is an abstract way to talk about human identity and, in its abstraction, the word opens up philosophical and theoretical possibilities to which some members of the Bowdoin community are clearly alert. “Difference” in some Bowdoin statements takes on the status of metaphysical principle, as though we know the world only via its differences. This, of course, runs counter to much of the Western philosophical and scientific tradition, in which knowledge is gained by recognizing the existence of natural categories and uncovering deep commonalities that unite what seemed at first disparate phenomena. In the perennial debate over the one and the many, the elevation of “difference” as a cardinal principle is a vote in favor of manyness and a vote against the comprehensibility of the world.

Difference carried to its extreme becomes a sterile and isolating individuation. Dwell sufficiently on the differences, and each person or object becomes an incomprehensible thing closed to all forms of commonality. When members of the Bowdoin community extol difference, they rarely mean that extreme, though some come pretty close. One of the student leaders at the

³²⁷Judah Isseroff, “Rediscovering the Joys of Classical Literature,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 15, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6318>.

³²⁸Alanna Beroiza, “The Day of Silence: Keeping Quiet to Give LGBT Issues a Voice,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 17, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4340>.

³²⁹“I Am Bowdoin Demonstration.”

“I Am Bowdoin” rally, for example, offered an intoxicating vision of “difference” sweeping away everything else: “We are all different. For too long our differences have sat side by side—unembraced. They should be celebrated. They should be accepted. Tolerance is not enough. Everyone matters! Everyone should be heard.”

More often, “difference” is put forward as a guiding principle with no real consideration of how it could or should be reconciled with the demands of intellectual synthesis or the search for underlying unities. President Mills has been the leading enthusiast for “difference” in this sense. Each year, for example, Mills welcomes incoming freshmen with a talk in which he teaches them about Bowdoin’s “culture”:

Now let’s talk a bit about our culture—a pluralistic environment designed to be by its nature inclusive. Every one of you has unique talents and every one of you has a unique past.³³⁰

This becomes a fugue on the types of difference to be found among students: advantaged vs. disadvantaged; family connected to Bowdoin vs. unconnected; “Some of you can paint, some can sing, some can skate, some are liberal, some conservative;” some speak English as a first language; some are from Maine, etc. This leads Mills to his vision of how the multitude of individuating differences can be “bridged”:

You share at least two important things in common which will allow you to bridge the differences in your backgrounds and interests. You can all learn from each other, and you all have something to teach. Second, you have a shared value—demonstrated by being here at Bowdoin tonight—a desire to learn and to open your minds to the pleasure of learning.³³¹

Mills clearly does not mean that “difference” is everything. He expects difference to exist in counterpoint with some forms of commonality. The differences, however, are vivid, concrete, and foregrounded. The commonalities are pallid and vague. The bridge that is built solely of learning “from each other” and sharing “the pleasure of learning” is not designed for heavy traffic.

Mills returns repeatedly to the theme of difference. Sometimes his position on the topic is consequential, as when in 2004 he intervened in a faculty meeting to defend the Exploring Social Differences (ESD) distribution requirement against faculty criticism. According to the faculty minutes, when a motion was introduced to drop the ESD requirement because “it is very vague” and would be perceived as “a political correctness requirement,” President Mills protested:

While [Mills] understands that some react to the political correctness of the category, with a closer look he feels that it sets principle....Bowdoin College should be a place for

³³⁰Barry Mills, “Student Welcome,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, August 25, 2001, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2001/student-welcome-01.shtml>.

³³¹Ibid.

the study of differences, and this category states what is important. It is a fundamental issue that students will come to understand or explore by the time they leave. He agreed that there will be many discussions after we adopt this proposal. However, this Exploration of Social Differences...is what we stand for.³³²

The motion to drop ESD was defeated 78 to 11 by secret ballot.

In the months before this vote, Mills had issued public letters to the campus community in which he laid some groundwork for his position. In February 2004, he wrote:

We at Bowdoin are committed to building a community that embraces difference. Differences in background, in experiences, and in beliefs are natural, valuable and entirely appropriate because they force us to look beyond ourselves and they challenge us to learn. Of course, differences may cause tension, but tension should be resolved through listening and discourse.³³³

He added, “I sense there is a real desire on the part of students, faculty and staff to engage in dialogue about our differences.”³³⁴

And in April 2004 he wrote, asking students: “Would you like our sense of difference to change, expand or narrow in any way? Do you envision more people like yourself—or truly different from yourself—at Bowdoin in the coming years?”³³⁵

In his 2008 convocation speech, Mills returned to the theme:

Our conception of Bowdoin today is that of a college that seeks to create opportunity for all regardless of difference, while at the same time celebrating and respecting the values and principles inherent in our differences.³³⁶

He further explained that the collective endeavor of Bowdoin “is participation in a residential community that seeks to understand difference while we also celebrate difference.”³³⁷

After the 2011 “I Am Bowdoin” rally, Mills wrote a *Bowdoin Daily Sun* essay lauding the protesters in which he observed, “Some students just don’t respect each other sufficiently or

³³²Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 10, 2004, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

³³³Barry Mills, “Message on Tolerance and Respect,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, February 19, 2004, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/letters/2004/tolerance-message.shtml>.

³³⁴Ibid.

³³⁵Barry Mills, “Message on Diversity,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, April 12, 2004, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/letters/2004/diversity-message.shtml>.

³³⁶Barry Mills, “Reunion Convocation ’08,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, September 3, 2008, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2008/convocation-08.shtml>.

³³⁷Ibid.

understand the reality of difference on our campus.”³³⁸ He concluded, “Bowdoin is not a bubble, but a cauldron of difference.”³³⁹

Difference also features prominently in Bowdoin’s canonical texts. “The Mission of the College” declares Bowdoin’s “commitment to creating a moral environment, free of fear and intimidation, and where differences can flourish.”³⁴⁰ “A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College” is especially attentive to the deleterious effects of difference on any attempt to promote a common good, but yet proposes a pedagogical response:

The challenge of defining a “common good” and acting on it is highlighted, however, in an interconnected world of widely varied cultures, interests, resources, and power. To prepare students for this complexity, a liberal education must teach about differences across cultures and within societies.³⁴¹

A third canonical text, the 1997 “Values of a Learning Community,” dedicates two of its ten values to difference:

2. Challenge and growth—A residential community brings together people of varying experiences, values, beliefs, and interests in the recognition that much learning and personal growth come through the creative friction created in contact with difference. Such a community also encourages its members to develop their own interests and talents as individuals and together in groups and provides opportunities for leadership and collaboration.

4. Mutual respect and civility of discourse—In a learning community, differences are prized and respected and disagreement is not meant or understood as personal animosity.³⁴²

Difference is also featured in a number of noncanonical yet integral institutional documents. The *Faculty Handbook*’s section on “Human Rights in the Bowdoin Community” demands a certain disposition towards differences: “Every student and faculty member at Bowdoin must maintain toward every other student and faculty member an unqualified respect for those rights that transcend differences of race, sex, or any other distinctions irrelevant to human dignity.”³⁴³ The *Student Handbook*, the *Faculty Handbook*, and the *Employee Handbook* each state that “Respect for the rights of all and for the differences among us is essential for the

³³⁸Barry Mills, “Barry Mills: Demonstrating Community,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, March 31, 2011, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2011/03/barry-mills-demonstrating-community/>.

³³⁹Ibid.

³⁴⁰“The Mission of the College,” *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2009–2010*, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/courses/catalog/pdf-09-10/03-mission.pdf>.

³⁴¹“A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College,” *Bowdoin College Catalogue*, 2011–2012, 15, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/courses/catalog/pdf-09-10/09-liberal-education.pdf>.

³⁴²“Values of a Learning Community,” Bowdoin College, Campus Life, The Learning Community, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/campus-life/values.shtml>.

³⁴³*Faculty Handbook 2012–2013*, 14.

Bowdoin community.”³⁴⁴ The *Guide to Your Bowdoin Education*, a document meant to prepare incoming freshmen, advises:

A liberal arts education decidedly does not represent a particular world view or set of values. On the contrary, it welcomes the expression of difference as an opportunity for learning. Within this context, a liberal arts education actively engages you in the discussion of difference; it strives to promote a better understanding of difference, an appreciation of difference, and, perhaps most importantly, it strives to reduce fear of difference.³⁴⁵

Difference is also central to Bowdoin’s extracurricular and co-curricular offerings. For example, the Office of Residential Life offers a program called “Discussing Difference,” which was created as

a means for students, faculty and staff to speak openly, honestly and authentically about issues that are often difficult to discuss. The goal is for participants to hear and be heard in a non-judgmental and affirming atmosphere. Through small group work students, faculty and staff have discussed issues revolving around race, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, nationality, socio-economic status and ability among others. Although participant’s stories might vary dramatically, they see that through their difference, we are often more similar than we believe. Though this program is run by the Office of Residential Life, it has been used in a variety of departments and clubs on campus including sports teams, faculty training and Upward Bound.³⁴⁶

“Difference” is thus a term that can be traced through many, perhaps nearly all, the contexts of public life at Bowdoin. It evokes individuation, but individuation filtered through sociological categories, of which race, class, gender, and sexual preference are the most prominent. The word is a key to the worldview that prevails at Bowdoin. Students are endlessly exhorted to focus on what makes each of them unique. But some distinguishing forms of uniqueness count much more than others. The student who is especially well read in English literature, the student who is a devout Orthodox Jew, or the student who is a strong advocate of traditional marriage is not likely to be singled out at Bowdoin for praiseworthy “difference”—though these would indeed be significant differences within the Bowdoin student population.

Rather, “difference” gives a vague warrant for the endless possibilities of human difference while giving a specific home for the sorts of differences that lend themselves to group oppression narratives. This appears to put the students assigned to these categories into a

³⁴⁴ *Faculty Handbook 2012–2013*, 13, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/forms-policies/policies/pdf/12-13FacultyHandbook.pdf>; *Student Handbook 2011–2012*, 25, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook/print-section.shtml>; *Employee Handbook*, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/hr/handbook/general-policies/index.shtml>.

³⁴⁵ Office of the Dean of Student Affairs and Office of the Dean for Academic Affairs, *Guide to Your Bowdoin Education* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, DATE), 5, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/orientation/pdf/Guide%20to%20Your%20Bowdoin%20Education08.pdf>.

³⁴⁶ “Discussing Difference,” Bowdoin College, Residential Life, Programs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/reslife/programs/discussing-differences.shtml>.

psychological bind. They are told from the beginning of their Bowdoin careers that their “differences” are important and valuable, but they are also told that their differences are a kind of stigma that inevitably isolates them. The “I Am Bowdoin” rally perhaps best exemplifies what happens when students are fully persuaded that their core identities inhere in social difference.

VI. Diversity

For the last quarter century “diversity” has been one of the most frequently used words in American higher education. Its primary application has been to justify lowered admissions standards to college for individuals who claim to belong to specific minority groups. This meaning of the word was established by Justice Lewis Powell’s June 1978 opinion in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*.

Bowdoin’s use of the concept of diversity is in no way exceptional. The college has followed the general track of American higher education of having adopted racial preferences in admissions long before anyone thought of justifying those preferences in terms of “intellectual diversity.” Likewise, Bowdoin had established in 1969 what eventually became Africana studies and begun earnest efforts to recruit minority faculty members well before the diversity doctrine arrived. But by the 1980s, when identity politics was being reconceptualized in terms of “diversity,” Bowdoin followed along. The earliest instance we have found of “diversity” used as a justification for group preferences is by the Faculty Affairs Committee in 1983–1984, when the faculty approved a statement for the *Faculty Handbook*:

As a coeducational institution with a long-standing commitment to the education of minorities, Bowdoin College is dedicated to the principle of equal opportunity. Its commitment to excellence in the liberal arts recognizes the value of diversity and the educational importance of including the perspectives of minorities and women in the classroom. Bowdoin College thus pursues a hiring policy designed to expand faculty *diversity* and to assure that vigorous efforts are made to seek out and to appoint the best qualified persons to its Faculty.³⁴⁷ (emphasis added)

This was not, of course, the first appearance of racial preferences in hiring at Bowdoin, which substantially antedated the “diversity” rationale. Bowdoin’s first “Affirmative Action Plan” was formulated in 1971 by President Howell. Its basic goal was to provide

equal opportunity in all aspects of the life of the College with respect to minority peoples and with respect to women to the full extent that is consistent with recognized sound employment and educational practices and with the College’s responsibility for service to the State and community in which it is located.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷Cited in the “Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity,” Bowdoin College, November 9, 1992, 3, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, folder 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

³⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 2.

The faculty's 1983 action amounted to conferring on this earlier statement a new purpose. Equal opportunity was no longer the goal—henceforth, diversity would be. This is not a distinction without a difference. “Equal opportunity” means the elimination of preferences and barriers. “Diversity” generally means a new regime of preferences and barriers.

The word “diversity” did not arrive at this new meaning all at once. For many years before the *Bakke* decision, diversity in higher education usually referred to the variety of colleges and universities: liberal arts colleges, research universities, secular, religious, public, and private. In the 1960s, Harvard pioneered a new admissions policy aimed at creating geographic balance among its undergraduates (students from Idaho and Iowa as well as Ipswich and Shaker Heights) and assembling a variety of talents (football players and oboists). One amicus brief submitted in the *Bakke* case in support of the University of California's racial preferences came from Columbia University, Stanford University, Harvard University, and the University of Pennsylvania, and included an appendix, “Harvard College Admissions Program,” an anonymous document that described Harvard's commitment to reaching beyond “scholarly excellence” in choosing whom to admit. Other criteria included “interests, backgrounds and career goals.”³⁴⁹

Fatefully, that anonymous statement interpreted the search for “breadth” as a commitment to “diversity,” which it described as “an essential ingredient to the educational process.” And it continued that “diversity” had changed over time from recruiting “city dwellers and farm boys; violinists, painters and football players,” to seeking “blacks, Chicanos and other minority students.” This is the source that Powell cited in his opinion in *Bakke* that racial preferences justified as the pursuit of “diversity” might pass Constitutional muster and the exacting judicial standard of “strict scrutiny.”³⁵⁰

Bowdoin seems to have arrived at the idea roughly at the same time as Harvard. “Diversity” appears in a statement approved by Bowdoin's governing boards in January 1976:

Our need to be selective has inevitably required that attention be given to the principles of selection. We approve the current admission policy which seeks students who share the common characteristic of being seriously committed to the pursuit of the liberal arts education, but who, beyond that, have different interests, backgrounds and skills. The common denominator of intellectual commitment presupposes a candidate capable of not merely handling the academic program but of profiting from it and contributing to it. Beyond that common denominator, a candidate ought ideally to possess some particular skill, or interest or to represent a culture, region or background that will contribute to the *diversity* of the college.³⁵¹ (emphasis added)

³⁴⁹See Peter Wood, *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003), 118.

³⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 118–119.

³⁵¹Reprinted in the *Bowdoin College Catalogue 1983–1984*, 55.

The boards' statement enunciated a conception of "diversity" as early as 1976, two years before the *Bakke* decision, though without particular emphasis on race. "Culture, region or background" might be read, with the benefit of hindsight, as euphemisms for race and ethnicity, but that seems unlikely. By 1976 when Bowdoin wanted to speak of race and ethnicity, it did so openly, as it had in its 1971 "Affirmative Action Statement." In the 1976 case, it chose not to reference race or ethnicity as among the human qualities that it would foreground in its pursuit of "diversity." In any case, the word falls at the end of the statement without particular emphasis or elaboration.

By contrast, today diversity is probably the concept at Bowdoin that has the largest number of important policy implications of any of its key concepts. Diversity plays foundational roles in admissions, faculty appointments, administrative appointments, academic standards, campus organizations, and campus policies. We will examine admissions and faculty appointments in detail.

The concept of diversity is clearly a cousin to, if not a synonym for "difference," and both words are frequently used in the vicinity of "inclusion" or "inclusivity." Some students and administrators use the terms "diversity" and "difference" interchangeably, but there is warrant for treating them separately. "Diversity" is an idea developed by lawyers to justify racial preferences in college admissions. It has evolved into a more encompassing doctrine, but it retains the role of a policy-oriented concept. "Difference" is an idea drawn from social theory and structuralists and poststructuralist philosophy. It offers a worldview congenial to advocates of "diversity," but it has its own intellectual and psychological entailments. "Inclusion" is what occurs when the moral imperatives of respecting difference and pursuing diversity have been achieved. Failures of inclusion (sometimes phrased as "exclusion" or "exclusivity") are in this prism cardinal wrongs. We look more closely at the language of inclusivity in the section on student culture later in the report.

"Diversity" in Admissions

Bowdoin describes its student body as "30.3 percent students of color."³⁵² Achieving *racial* diversity has become the bedrock idea whenever the word diversity is now deployed, though that meaning is sometimes buried beneath avowals that other kinds of diversity matter, too. But other kinds of diversity do not elicit the anxious attention of faculty members and administrators that racial diversity does. Bowdoin monitors its success in recruiting black students with exquisite care, and to achieve higher enrollments of black students it exercises an extraordinary level of racial preference in admissions. The overall acceptance rate for students who applied for admission to Bowdoin in 2011 was 16.1 percent. The acceptance rate for black students was more than double that: 35.1 percent. Later in this report we present a detailed account, with additional statistics, of how racial preferences work in Bowdoin's admissions

³⁵² "Answers to Frequently Asked Questions," Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/faqs.shtml>.

process. Our goal in this section is to show how Bowdoin conceptualizes diversity as a key component of student recruitment.

Over the years Bowdoin had developed or joined numerous programs intended to enhance recruitment of minority students. For example, Bowdoin joined the POSSE program in 1999, an initiative that helped the college to yield nine minority students. POSSE, a “college access and youth leadership development program” founded in 1989 in New York, aimed to create a conduit for minority students to take them from urban public schools to higher education. A “Posse” in POSSE is a “multicultural team made up of ten students,” who are supposed to encourage one another in their academic aspirations.³⁵³ After participating in POSSE for several years, Bowdoin withdrew in favor of more promising minority recruitment tools.

Another Bowdoin diversity initiative aimed at recruiting minority students is the Chamberlain Scholars program, instituted in 2000. According to the March 6, 2000, faculty minutes, the first cohort of Chamberlain Scholars was seven students from “around the country” who were “chosen based on academic and leadership potential.”³⁵⁴ In 2010, the *Bowdoin Orient* reported that the Chamberlain Scholars program was created “to address the observed lack of diversity on campus.”³⁵⁵ By 2010 the program had grown to forty-three students who were able to attend Bowdoin “free of charge.” According to the *Orient* article, “The award covers students’ tuition, book expenses and travel costs, in addition to providing a \$3,000 stipend for other educational opportunities.” Sandra Martinez (Class of 2013), a student in the program, described the Chamberlain Scholars as “leaders from underrepresented backgrounds.”³⁵⁶ Bowdoin doesn’t publicly declare which “underrepresented backgrounds” qualify for the program, but most appear to be African Americans.³⁵⁷

The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program was established at Bowdoin in 1992 and named for Benjamin Mays, an African American scholar and former president of Morehouse College. A Mellon Mays fellowship is granted to students who are “[t]raditionally marginalized persons of color and those who are qualified and have demonstrated the appropriate intellectual drive for higher education.” Fellows are given resources to “Design and complete an independent research project” and are provided with additional support to assist them in their academic pursuits. Fellows are required to “meet regularly with the program director and faculty advisory committee and be prepared to receive feedback and evaluation of overall academic

³⁵³“Quick Facts + FAQ.” The POSSE Foundation, Inc., <http://www.possefoundation.org/quick-facts#howdidposse>.

³⁵⁴Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, March 6, 2000, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

³⁵⁵Karoline Dubin, “Chamberlain Scholars Look to Redefine Their Bowdoin Experience,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 29, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5716>.

³⁵⁶Ibid.

³⁵⁷“Chamberlain Scholars Photogallery,” Bowdoin College, Office of Special Academic Programs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/special-academic-programs/scholarships-fellowships/photo-galleries/chamberlain-photo-gallery.shtml>.

performance at the end of each semester.”³⁵⁸ The Mellon Mays fellowship is ultimately aimed at providing the “marginalized person of color” with the skills necessary to pursue a Ph.D.

The Chamberlain Scholars and the Mellon Mays Fellows are overseen by Bowdoin’s Office of Special Academic Programs.³⁵⁹ But this office is not the only part of the Bowdoin bureaucracy concerned with minority student recruitment. The Office of Admissions runs a series of programs targeting minority high school students. These are the Bowdoin Invitational, the Experience Weekend, and Explore Bowdoin, each of which is a four-day weekend program intended to give students a firsthand introduction to all the college has to offer.³⁶⁰

Bowdoin Invitational: An ongoing program begun in the early 1980s. A 2007 *Bowdoin Orient* article provides an overview:

On Thursday, students of all socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds arrived from across the United States and abroad to attend the annual Bowdoin Invitational, a weekend of special events for prospective multicultural applicants....

This weekend, 92 elite students will enjoy a weekend of activities until they depart on Sunday....

The College funds the entire weekend for all students (including transportation and meals), regardless of financial background....

The Invitational is typically a huge success for the College, with 30 percent of attendees matriculating the next year.³⁶¹

The article quotes Elmer Moore, associate dean of admissions and coordinator of multicultural recruitment:

It’s difficult to say what the cost is, but it’s up there. But whatever the cost is, it’s worth it to get these students up here to experience the College first hand. It’s hard to go meet these students in their hometowns and try to explain to them the culture and community that this place offers, especially when on a map Bowdoin seems so far away from what they know.³⁶²

Experience Weekend: A program aimed at converting minority students who have been offered admission to Bowdoin into students willing to enroll.³⁶³ According to a 2010 *Bowdoin Orient*

³⁵⁸“Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program,” Bowdoin College, Office of Special Academic Programs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/special-academic-programs/scholarships-fellowships/mmuf/index.shtml>.

³⁵⁹Ibid.

³⁶⁰Mariya Ilyas, “Experience Weekend Sets Views for Multicultural Student Life,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 30, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5369>.

³⁶¹Cameron Weller, “Invitational Welcomes Minority Prospectives to Campus,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 9, 2007, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3063>.

³⁶²Ibid.

³⁶³We have not been able to determine when Bowdoin began Experience Weekend. The earliest documentary evidence we have found shows that it was in place by 2000.

article, this weekend provides, again in the words of Dean Moore, “an opportunity usually for multicultural, low-income, first-generational students who have not had the opportunity to come see Bowdoin.”³⁶⁴ But Moore also explained that while “We don’t have minority recruitment,” Bowdoin does have “multicultural and diversity recruitment,” and Experience Weekend is part of it. In a 2007 *Bowdoin Orient* article, assistant dean of admissions Erby Mitchell explained that Experience Weekend tries to convey to students that they “belong at Bowdoin” because of their unique qualifications:

We admitted them because we think they’ll make huge contributions to Bowdoin and the world...Many are students of color, [for] whom we feel seeing the campus will help make a difference.³⁶⁵

At a 2012 Experience Weekend, President Mills told the students, “This place is about changing people’s lives. Bowdoin creates the opportunity for all sorts of wonderful things to happen in your life.”³⁶⁶

Explore Bowdoin: “[A] multi-day program...designed to welcome gifted students who would bring cultural or geographic diversity to the campus if they were to matriculate,” as described in a 2012 *Bowdoin Daily Sun* article. “Bowdoin covers the cost of their visit, and there is no commitment to apply, explained Claudia Marroquin, associate dean of multicultural recruitment for Bowdoin’s admissions office.”³⁶⁷

The *Grutter* and *Gratz* Cases

Racial preferences in college admissions, minority-only scholarships, and programs aimed at disparate favorable treatment of minority students are hugely controversial in the United States. Over the years there have been numerous legal challenges to institutions that employ these policies. As mentioned above, the most prominent of recent cases were two lawsuits filed against the University of Michigan that eventuated in a pair of June 2003 U.S. Supreme Court decisions. *Gratz v. Bollinger* challenged the University of Michigan’s system of awarding “points” toward undergraduate admission for being a member of an underrepresented minority group. *Grutter v. Bollinger* challenged the University of Michigan Law School’s more opaque system of awarding preference in admission to minority students.

The Court struck down the undergraduate point system but allowed the law school’s system of “wholistic assessment” to stand. More important, the majority opinion written by Justice Sandra Day O’Connor for the first time put the Supreme Court on record as allowing

³⁶⁴Ilyas, “Experience Weekend.”

³⁶⁵Sam Waxman, “Admissions Programs Hopes to Increase Minority Yield,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 13, 2007, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/2586>.

³⁶⁶“President Mills Welcomes Students to the ‘Bowdoin Experience,’” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, April 25, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2012/04/president-mills-welcomes-students-to-the-bowdoin-experience/>.

³⁶⁷“High-Achieving High School Students, From Near and Far, Explore Bowdoin,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, September 25, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2012/09/high-achieving-high-school-students-from-near-and-far-explore-bowdoin/>.

states to use the Powellian doctrine of “diversity” as a legitimate reason to engage in the practices of classifying students by race and treating members of some races more favorably than others.

President Mills and Bowdoin College played a role in these cases, first as an ally of the University of Michigan. In 2002, Bowdoin College joined with twenty-six other liberal arts colleges to file an amicus brief supporting the diversity doctrine and the use of racial preferences in college admissions. The brief is perhaps most notable for its focus on why “selective colleges and universities” should be exempt from the Constitutional and statutory prohibitions on racial discrimination. The argument is that the “Court should consider the experience of admissions before diversity was highly valued,” and “the progress toward more equal opportunity” since. “African American students were largely absent” from most selective colleges and universities until the 1960s, and began to attend in significant numbers only when “those schools began to aim for racial diversity.” The amici also warn that were the Court to prohibit racial preferences in college admissions, there would be a “substantial resegregating effect.”³⁶⁸

The argument of the brief is, in short, that racial preferences are needed in higher education to ensure historical justice to African Americans. This is odd, in light of the *Bakke* decision, which introduced the diversity argument precisely as a way to frame racial preferences wholly apart from claims that colleges and universities should be allowed to pursue policies of creating their own versions of racial justice. Justice Powell ruled that those policies were not legal, but went on to speculate that racial preferences in the pursuit of intellectual diversity might pass legal muster.

The brief, by contrast, argues that racial preferences in college admissions have succeeded in increasing the number of enrolled African American students and, on that basis alone, should be considered valid. This is, however, an argument that does not engage the main legal questions of the two cases: whether the pursuit of diversity is a sufficient warrant for higher education to have its own loophole in the laws prohibiting racial classifications and discrimination.

The amicus brief that Bowdoin joined does have an answer to this: that the objections to *diversity*-justified racial preferences are legal, not educational, in nature. The twenty-seven colleges mean to speak for the *educational* importance of diversity:

There are sound *educational* reasons (and others as well) why higher education institutions of all sorts—not only those subject to legislative direction, but also private, highly selective ones—have virtually without exception concluded that *many different kinds of diversity, including racial diversity*, best create the circumstances for the learning

³⁶⁸Brief of Amherst, Bates, Bowdoin, Bryn Mawr, Carleton, Colby, Colgate, Connecticut, Davidson, Franklin and Marshall, Hamilton, Hampshire, Haverford, Macalester, Middlebury, Mount Holyoke, Oberlin, Pomona, Sarah Lawrence, Smith, Swarthmore, Trinity, Vassar, Washington and Lee, Wellesley, and Williams Colleges and Wesleyan and Tufts Universities, *Amici Curiae*, Supporting Respondents. U.S. Supreme Court, *Barbara Grutter v. Lee Bollinger, et al.* and *Jennifer Gratz and Patrick Hamacher v. Lee Bollinger, et al.*, nos. 02-516, 02-241, February 14, 2003, 2–3, http://www.vpcomm.umich.edu/admissions/legal/gra_amicus-ussc/um/Amherst-both.pdf.

required in the 21st century, and that schools should therefore try to obtain that diversity.³⁶⁹ (emphases in original)

The brief's authors decline to say much about these "educational" reasons, deeming them self-evident:

Diversity in all its aspects is one of the factors that make American colleges and universities unique, educationally superior, and the envy of the world. There is a reason why students bear a path to schools where diversity is celebrated and sought out, and why those schools are widely judged to provide excellence beyond the capacities of narrower institutions.³⁷⁰

American courts have a long history of deferring to colleges and universities about educational priorities and in that sense this argument may have been well-aimed. It is worth noting, however, that the amicus brief falsely depicts the decisions in the 1960s of colleges and universities to admit African Americans as motivated by the pursuit of diversity. Neither the term nor the underlying idea had any important role in this civil rights accomplishment. Likewise, the depiction of "diversity" as a transcendent educational good recognized by "virtually without exception" all "higher education institutions" has an odd a-historical quality, since diversity as an educational goal had faint presence before Justice Powell's elevation of it in his 1978 decision.

Even before the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the University of Michigan in *Grutter*, President Mills announced to the Bowdoin Faculty that he had played a central role in drafting this amicus brief and getting others to sign.³⁷¹ Several months after the decision was handed down, Mills lauded the Court and took a bow for Bowdoin in his 2003 convocation address:

The decision of the United States Supreme Court this summer in the University of Michigan case is remarkably gratifying to colleges like Bowdoin because, in its decision, the Court acknowledged college and university assertions establishing as paramount the educational benefits of diversity. In clear and unmistakable language the Supreme Court acknowledged that diversity on college campuses remains a compelling state interest.³⁷²

Mills added:

Here at Bowdoin, we have long understood that a diversity of view and experience are crucial components of the educational environment we seek to create and maintain... In fact we should take some pride in the fact that the Court referenced in large part a legal brief that Bowdoin joined in preparing as support for the majority opinion....

³⁶⁹Ibid., 4.

³⁷⁰Ibid., 5.

³⁷¹Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, March 3, 2003, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

³⁷²Barry Mills, "Convocation Welcome: Pres. Barry Mills," *Campus News*, September 3, 2003, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1bowdoincampus/001321.shtml>.

...Our goal—now with the Court’s blessing—is to continue to find young women and men with great potential from all walks of life and to do all we can to make them a part of this college.³⁷³

Mills also noted that the decision left Bowdoin exposed on a few points. It would no longer suffice merely to assume diversity’s worth—eventually it would have to be demonstrated. The Court’s decision assumes that

colleges are correct in their assertion that there truly is an educational value in diversity. In making that assumption one can only predict that some will ultimately seek objective proof that diversity on campus actually has a demonstrable educational benefit. We must demonstrate what we believe to be true; that a pluralistic community of scholars, living and learning together adds up to something great, something valuable for our society. Merely saying so or believing so may not and should not be sufficient justification for our policies.³⁷⁴

For a while, the Court’s decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* seemed to put an end to the question of the legitimacy of diversity as an educational goal encompassing racial preferences. But the controversy has continued. As noted earlier, a case now before the Court, *Fisher v. The University of Texas*, has put many of the same issues on the table.

And Bowdoin College has once again joined an amicus brief asserting the primary importance of diversity as a goal of liberal arts education. The new brief follows the brief in *Grutter* in framing the matter as one of righting historical injustices to African Americans.³⁷⁵

Faculty Diversity

Bowdoin has been as eager to recruit minority faculty members as it has minority students. This is nothing new. When Professor Levine declared to the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee in March 1969 that Bowdoin *must* establish an Afro-American studies program, the discussion turned to finding African American faculty to teach it. The effort to recruit African American faculty members quickly broadened to bringing more minority faculty members to all departments. By the 1980s, this challenge had been reframed as increasing “faculty diversity.” In March 1991, Bowdoin appointed a Subcommittee on Diversity to focus on, among other things, the recruitment of minority faculty. The subcommittee, for example, reported:

³⁷³Ibid.

³⁷⁴Ibid.

³⁷⁵Brief of Amherst, Allegheny, Barnard, Bates, Bowdoin, Bryn Mawr, Carleton, Colby, Connecticut, Davidson, Dickinson, Franklin & Marshall, Grinnell, Hamilton, Hampshire, Haverford, Lafayette, Macalester, Middlebury, Mount Holyoke, Oberlin, Pomona, Reed, Sarah Lawrence, Simmons, Smith, St. Olaf, Swarthmore, Trinity, Union, Vassar, Wellesley, and Williams Colleges [sic], and Bucknell, *Amici Curiae*, Supporting Respondents. U.S. Supreme Court, *Abigail Noel Fisher v. University of Texas, et al.*, no. 11-345, August 13, 2012, <http://www.utexas.edu/vp/irla/Documents/ACR%20Amherst%20et.%20al..pdf>.

At Bowdoin, however, no African American has been hired in a tenurable position since 1980. And during the last ten years only one Asian and one Latin American have been hired in tenurable positions, neither of whom is currently on the faculty.³⁷⁶

According to the report, in 1991 ten out of 163 Bowdoin faculty members were classified as members of minority groups.

The relative dearth of minority faculty members has become a perennial concern of both the faculty and President Mills. The faculty minutes, for example, record this discussion in May 2003:

Michael Owens expressed concern “about the loss of African-American faculty and felt that it was a complement that we are being poached (not just African-American faculty). We should recognize that perhaps we are proving ground for young minority faculty and adjust to this reality. He advised to be proactive and to go after talent.”³⁷⁷

In 2005, President Mills expressed frustration with Bowdoin’s limited success in attracting African American faculty members:

We have a diverse faculty, but we have very few African Americans who will come to Bowdoin. It is difficult to find talented African Americans who will come to Bowdoin. We will continue to work towards the recruitment of faculty from diverse backgrounds, but we will try to include many types of diversity in our recruitment. It is much harder to recruit minority faculty than students. [We] need to work with the faculty and the Dean’s office to find a better retention strategy.³⁷⁸

Bowdoin’s 2006 *Self-Study* echoed Mills’s frustration: “the College has had serious challenges in attracting and retaining African American faculty.”³⁷⁹ Even though Afro-American studies was created in part to “find black faculty to teach it,” it has been black faculty who have proved to be the most elusive. Speaking to the faculty, Mills conceded, “No other schools have figured it out.” But he remained resolute: “This doesn’t mean we shouldn’t try.”³⁸⁰

That effort has taken a number of forms. Bowdoin’s human resources department updated its “Affirmative Action” policy in July 2009, which now states: “As a liberal arts college, Bowdoin College recognizes the educational value of diversity in its faculty, students, and staff and the educational importance of including varied perspectives in the classroom and throughout

³⁷⁶“Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity,” Bowdoin College, November 9, 1992, 6, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, folder 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

³⁷⁷Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 19, 2003, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

³⁷⁸Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, April 4, 2005, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

³⁷⁹*The Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2006), 45.

³⁸⁰Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, April 4, 2005, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

the campus.”³⁸¹ The 2009 policy gives greatest weight to a pedagogical rationale for diversity, in contrast to earlier forms of the statement, one of which continues to appear in the *Faculty Handbook*. The evolution of the statement bears note:

2000–2001: In order to improve the diversity of the faculty, and to redress *the under-representation of women and minorities* in the faculty, Bowdoin will consider among qualifications for appointment, a candidate’s gender and ethnicity (*specifically, African American, Asian American, Latino American, Native American*).³⁸²

2005–2006: A faculty and staff of men and women from *various cultures and ethnic and racial groups* immeasurably contribute to the *quality of the educational experience*.

As a multicultural campus community, *respect for the rights of all and for the differences among us* is essential to Bowdoin. As an employer committed to diversity, the College seeks and welcomes applications from candidates from a range of cultural experiences and backgrounds and from those who can *demonstrate a commitment to diversity*.³⁸³ (emphases added)

The 2000–2001 statement, which appeared in the *Faculty Handbook*, does nod to the educational importance of diversity—as in Bowdoin recognizes “the value of diversity and the educational importance of including the perspectives of minorities and women in the classroom”—but its emphasis falls squarely on specifically identified races and ethnicities and on “fairness.” The named races and ethnicities vanish from the 2005–2006 statement, and the justification in terms of “educational experience,” “difference,” and “diversity” is much more salient. The 2005–2006 statement survives as the “Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action in Employment” statement in the current *Faculty Handbook*, although it differs in some respects from the statement put out by the human resources department. Broadly speaking, both the human resources version and the 2005–2006 *Faculty Handbook* version have been adjusted to reflect the legal reasoning of *Grutter*. Affirmative action at Bowdoin now rests explicitly on the doctrine of diversity, not on premises about social justice.

As with its efforts to increase the number of minority students, Bowdoin has continued to experiment with ways to yield larger numbers of minority faculty. According to the *2006 Self-Study*:

To broaden approaches to faculty hiring, Bowdoin has undertaken several new initiatives, expanding the places in which we advertise, involving alumni of color in identifying possible candidates, and establishing connections with graduate student organizations at institutions with higher percentages of graduate students of color. Most importantly, the

³⁸¹“Affirmative Action,” Bowdoin College, Human Resources, Employee Handbook, General Policies, July 2009, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/hr/handbook/general-policies/index.shtml>.

³⁸²*Faculty Handbook 2000–2001*, 10, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/forms-policies/policies/pdf/f00handbook.pdf>.

³⁸³*Faculty Handbook 2005–2006*, 10, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/forms-policies/policies/pdf/05-06FacultyHandbook.pdf>.

Dean's Office encourages departments and programs to become more active in widening applicant pools (for example, by reviewing lists of recipients of national fellowships such as those granted by the Ford Foundation and contacting graduate schools to identify and encourage potential candidates). Deans now organize debriefings of each search. The Dean for Academic Advancement has played a significant role in helping to develop these strategies.³⁸⁴

It also stated that "in 2006 the College will be evaluating how to implement a proposal to add to faculty diversity through a program of visiting senior faculty, post- and pre-doctoral fellows, and artists-in-residence."³⁸⁵

Bowdoin has produced a whirlwind of institutional activity around the recruitment of minority faculty members. The pursuit of minority faculty members probably ranks as the college's highest priority in the area of faculty development. We can document some important parts of this outpouring, but other parts take place behind Bowdoin's institutional veil. There are, for example, few sources of information on how much Bowdoin spends on minority faculty recruitment, though the figure is plainly quite high. Nor can we report on the salary premium or other benefits minority faculty members receive over nonminority faculty members.

For the sake of digesting a large body of material, we divide Bowdoin's faculty recruitment efforts for diversity into five categories:

- Efforts to keep the issue of minority faculty recruitment in the forefront of faculty discussion
- Efforts to pressure Bowdoin faculty members to make them more willing to bend academic standards in favor of minority candidates
- Efforts to advertise to minority candidates
- Efforts to ease the paths of minority candidates to appointment
- Efforts to make the college's minority recruitment look successful

Efforts to Keep the Issue of Minority Faculty Recruitment in the Forefront of Faculty Discussion

Bowdoin has been actively seeking faculty members who are African American since the late 1960s. Over the years the number of minority groups from which the college seeks minority faculty representation has steadily increased. During the roughly forty-three years since these efforts commenced, much of the discussion has focused on the relative failure of these efforts, questioning what has gone wrong and what might be done to rectify the situation.

³⁸⁴*Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006*, 46, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/pdf/standard-five.pdf>.

³⁸⁵*Ibid.*

Bowdoin formulated an affirmative policy in November 1971. In 1983–1984 the Faculty Affairs Committee created the first *Faculty Handbook* statement on affirmative action. In March 1991, the college convened a Subcommittee on Diversity, which produced a report in November 1992. The report documented Bowdoin’s failures in minority faculty recruitment and offered nine ways to improve.³⁸⁶

In 1998, Bowdoin issued the “Final Evaluation of the Bowdoin Diversity Implementation Plan.” The report noted several tangible results of Bowdoin’s diversity efforts since 1992, but it also lamented the meager increase of its African American faculty. Bowdoin’s African American faculty had increased from five to seven, while its Hispanic faculty increased from zero to four—which meant that the number of Hispanic faculty was growing by double the rate of African Americans.³⁸⁷ In the intervening years between the 1998 “Final Evaluation” and the *2006 Self-Study*, Bowdoin lost many of its African American recruits to other institutions. The *Self-Study* offered an unfavorable assessment: “Racial diversity among the faculty has increased at the same time that we have lost African American faculty representation.”³⁸⁸

In May 2009, the faculty voted to institute a “Policy on Increasing Faculty Diversity.” The authors of the policy placed it in the long stream of institutional frustration over the recruitment of African Americans and other minorities. The policy began by complimenting the 1992 “Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity,” calling it “well-argued.” The policy quoted the 1992 report’s statement that Bowdoin has “not done well” in “increasing the range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds represented in the faculty,” and offered its own assessment:

In recent years we have made much progress in enrolling a more diverse student body, for which our admissions office deserves praise, and we have made some inroads into diversifying the curriculum but have made less progress in increasing the diversity of the faculty. We seek to redress the latter.³⁸⁹

It adduced:

As we have added diversity requirements to the curriculum, the demand for faculty who have expertise in nontraditional areas has increased. Research continues to show a correlation between faculty diversity and the introduction of new scholarship that engages issues of diversity for all students. As well, a diverse faculty connects campuses

³⁸⁶The 1992 “Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity” observed that Bowdoin “has long been committed to the goal of increasing the range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds represented in the faculty as part of a larger goal of creating a community characterized by as much cultural and intellectual variety as possible. But we have not done well in this regard.” “Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity,” Bowdoin College, November 9, 1992, 6, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, folder 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

³⁸⁷“Bowdoin Issues a Five-Year Report on its Commitment to Diversity,” *Campus News*, November 15, 1998, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1bowdoincampus/000604.shtml>.

³⁸⁸*Bowdoin College 2006 Self-Study*, 119, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/pdf/standard-five.pdf>.

³⁸⁹“Policy on Increasing Faculty Diversity: Instituted May 2009 by Vote of the Faculty,” May 2009, cited in appendix A of “Faculty Recruitment Procedures 2012–2013,” Bowdoin College, Dean for Academic Affairs, 10, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/departments/chairs/pdf/faculty-recruiting-memo.pdf>.

to new bodies of work and new communities. Perhaps most importantly, a more diverse faculty creates classroom environments which support the academic and social success of students from diverse backgrounds.³⁹⁰

The faculty moved and approved a reaffirmation of its diversity commitment and an across-the-board approval of the committee's recommendations.

Those recommendations were: (1) the establishment of a standing Faculty Diversity Committee, (2) changes to the college's hiring plans for faculty positions, (3) changes to the college's hiring process for faculty positions, (4) suggestions for retention and faculty development, (5) and Target of Opportunity Positions.³⁹¹

Many of the policy's recommendations have been enacted, including the establishment of a standing Faculty Diversity Committee, which was charged to:

- a. Educate the faculty about best practices in faculty hiring and retention.
- b. Work with the Dean to ensure that departments and programs understand college hiring procedures.
- c. Provide trained faculty members to serve on tenure-track search committees....³⁹²

Efforts to Pressure Bowdoin Faculty Members to Make Them More Willing to Bend Academic Standards in Favor of Minority Candidates.

Bowdoin's frustration with the limited success of its efforts to recruit more black and other minority faculty members increasingly led to insistence that Bowdoin itself was to blame for putting unintentional obstacles in the way. The record of formal discussion very rarely acknowledges the extreme scarcity of black Ph.D.s in some academic disciplines, the ferocious competition among colleges and universities to appoint and retain the limited number of qualified minority candidates, or the disparities in candidates' credentials that has resulted from preferential treatment of minorities in both undergraduate and graduate programs. Rather, the Bowdoin faculty has been urged to look beyond elite graduate programs as sources of qualified candidates and to amend its own standards of scholarly accomplishment in favor of a broader view. This might mean, for example, taking publications in second- and third-tier academic journals as the equivalent of first-tier journal publication and accepting advocacy writing in lieu of scholarship, or denying that such a distinction is valid.

Much of this is captured in the sixteen-page "Faculty Recruitment Procedures 2012–2013," put out by the dean for academic affairs and adopted as one consequence of the May 2009 faculty resolution:

³⁹⁰Ibid.

³⁹¹Ibid., 10–12.

³⁹²Ibid., 10.

Committees are reminded that many criteria by which educational qualifications are judged may seem neutral but often they are not. For instance, preconceptions about the prestige of applicants' degree-granting institutions often limit recruitment efforts to favorite institutions or areas of the country. In order to diversity [*sic*] the applicant pool, search committees should consider the most able candidates from a broad range of graduate institutions. Search committees may be less familiar with work in new fields, but these should be considered as carefully as those in more traditional areas. Unconscious bias can also become a factor in the review of publications; search committee members need to take special care to assess the quality of scholarly work and contributions which may appear in unfamiliar journals. Similarly, the evaluation of entry-level candidates' future promise is fraught with difficulty and particularly open to bias. When making such judgments, search committees must take care not to expect more proven ability in some candidates than others.³⁹³

One of the ways in which Bowdoin enforces these prescriptions is by having a representative of the Faculty Diversity Committee sit in on the deliberations of all departmental search committees for tenure-line positions. We describe this in more detail below.

Efforts to Advertise to Minority Candidates

Bowdoin takes care that faculty recruitment initiatives include strenuous efforts to bring positions to the attention of minority applicants. One step consists of putting paid advertisements in journals specifically focused on publicizing career opportunities for minority scholars such as the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, where in August 2012 Bowdoin ran an ad for a tenure-track position in behavioral neuroscience. The ad, among other things, encouraged "inquiries from candidates who will enrich and contribute to the cultural and ethnic diversity of our college."³⁹⁴

Such advertising faces an uphill battle. Yale graduated its first black Ph.D. in neurobiology in 2007.³⁹⁵ There are 128 Ph.D. programs in neurobiology in the United States, many with few or no "underrepresented minority" candidates. The Society for Neuroscience's Professional Development Committee recently reported on the "Status of Minorities in Neuroscience," and related that in the United States in 2009 there were seven African American faculty members in the field of neuroscience, sixteen postdoctoral fellows, and twenty-one pre-doctoral candidates.³⁹⁶ The National Science Foundation (NSF) also tracks by race and ethnicity Ph.D.s awarded in the sciences and other disciplines. The latest NSF data from 2010 shows the

³⁹³Ibid., 5.

³⁹⁴This advertisement has since been removed from the website.

³⁹⁵Maggie Reid, "Grad Is Yale's First Black Ph.D. in Neurobiology," *Yale News*, April 6, 2007, <http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2007/apr/06/grad-is-yales-first-black-phd-in-neurobiology/>.

³⁹⁶Society for Neuroscience Professional Development Committee, "Department Chair Training to Increase Women in Neuroscience," IWiN PowerPoint, slide 8, "Status of Minorities in Neuroscience" (Washington, DC: Society for Neuroscience, 2009).

very small numbers of new Ph.D.s awarded to African Americans in many fields: zero of 266 Ph.D.s awarded in astronomy, 14 of 511 in earth sciences, 37 of 1,589 in mathematics, 29 of 1,619 in physics, 89 of 2,306 in chemistry, and 284 of 8,052 in biology.³⁹⁷

To beat these odds, Bowdoin offers, among other things, a “Checklist for Search Committee Chairs and Academic Department Coordinators: Tenure-Track Appointments”:

Job ad placement: Job ads must be approved by the deans. One print ad must be placed in a national journal. The dean’s office will place an ad listing all tenure track searches in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*; *Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*; and, for the sciences, *SACNAS Conference Journal*. ADCs will place the ad in any field-specific journals or newsletters and websites per the search plan, and prepare bulk mailing to major graduate programs (if appropriate).³⁹⁸

SACNAS is an organization devoted to “advancing Hispanics/Chicanos and Native Americans in Science.”³⁹⁹ ADCs are “academic coordinators.”

The ads, however, have limited success. According to the “Faculty Recruitment Procedures”:

Our experience shows that placing job openings in either discipline-specific or general-purpose media like the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, although necessary, is rarely sufficient to attract the best candidates and most diverse applicant pool.⁴⁰⁰

The directions to the search committee include the injunction that “All ads should conclude with the standard affirmative action statement,” which is:

A highly selective liberal arts college on the Maine coast with a diverse student body made up of 30% students of color, 4% International students and approximately 15% first generation college students, Bowdoin College is committed to equality and diversity and is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage inquiries from candidates who will enrich and contribute to the cultural and ethnic diversity of our college. Bowdoin College does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, creed, color, religion, marital status, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, veteran status, national origin, or disability status in employment, or in our education programs.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷“National Science Foundation Survey of Earned Doctorates,” National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Tabulation Engine, 2010, <https://nces.norc.org/NSFTabEngine/#TABULATION>.

³⁹⁸“Checklist for Search Committee Chairs and Academic Department Coordinators: Tenure-Track Appointments,” Bowdoin College, Dean for Academic Affairs Office, <https://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/department-chairs/pdf/checklist11-12.pdf>.

³⁹⁹“About SACNAS,” SACNAS, About, <http://sacnas.org/about>.

⁴⁰⁰“Faculty Recruitment Procedures 2012–2013,” 2.

⁴⁰¹*Ibid.*, 4.

Efforts to Ease the Paths of Minority Candidates to Appointment

Identifying plausible minority candidates for faculty appointment is one thing; actually recruiting them to Bowdoin is another. Bowdoin has also spent a great deal of time and effort trying to increase the minority yield from its faculty searches.

In March 2008, President Mills met with the faculty to discuss the work of the ad hoc Group on Increasing Faculty Diversity. The group had called for more money to support “special opportunity appointments” to the faculty, i.e., minority candidates. According to the faculty minutes, “Professor Seth Ramus (Psychology) asked how many such special positions could be expected.” Mills responded by expressing his commitment to diversity and his frustration that “the ordinary course of hiring” had fallen short in delivering the diversity he wanted. The minutes continue:

[Mills] said that, although the best and most economical way to succeed in increasing faculty diversity is through hiring for positions that already exist, he thinks he can raise the money for enough special opportunity positions to make a significant effect.

Barry asserted that, whether this proposal passes or not, he would like to see evidence that the faculty truly values hiring people from traditions different from the conventional Bowdoin culture. Barry suggested he could raise funds for “more than one and less than ten” special opportunity positions. He also said this is the only case in which he would consider allowing a hire to occur before the funding is fully secured.⁴⁰²

Mills had made clear that his priority was not to meet the college’s *academic* needs but to meet what he took to be its need for a more diverse faculty. To this end, faculty searches were put under pressure to find minority candidates or risk not being able to hire anyone.

The pressure took various forms. The “Faculty Recruitment Procedures” lay out an elaborate protocol for enhancing the likelihood that a search eventuates in recommending a minority candidate. The section of the document describes this process at length, beginning with “widening the applicant pool,” which includes steps such as consulting the Ford Foundation, the Consortium for Faculty Diversity, SACNAS, and the Faculty Diversity Committee. The search committee cannot proceed without first convincing the Dean for Academic Affairs office that it had sufficiently widened the applicant pool to include “women and historically underrepresented groups.”

The search then proceeds through three stages, each of which requires oversight that will ensure that diversity is a primary consideration of the applicant search. A representative of the Faculty Diversity Committee is present through each stage. The dean’s office warns that:

⁴⁰²Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, March 3, 2008, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

Once search committees have ensured a deep and diverse applicant pool, they need to take care that good candidates are not inadvertently eliminated in the screening process. Accessing merit is a difficult task and an aspect of the search process most open to unexamined bias.⁴⁰³

The second stage adds another layer of administrative oversight. The search committee is charged with creating a “long list” of the top eight to twelve candidates. After the list is compiled, the chair of the search committee must meet with the associate dean for academic affairs, who is charged with overseeing “affirmative action” in the dean’s office. The procedure states that “This meeting will also consider the relationship of the long list to the demographics of the entire candidate pool for the position.”⁴⁰⁴

The third stage begins with the committee whittling down prospects to a “short list,” a cohort of three candidates selected for on-campus interviews. After the interviews are conducted, the search committee recommends its preferred candidate to the administration.

These provisions aimed at ensuring that search committees produced more “diverse” candidates were not always received with enthusiasm by Bowdoin’s faculty, some of whom had misgivings, especially over the imposition of a member of the Faculty Diversity Committee as part of every search. This outside member of the search often ended up being someone without academic competence in the relevant discipline who would, essentially, serve as monitor of the proceedings to ensure that through every step “diversity” remained fully in view.

In a series of meetings during the 2008–2009 academic year, various faculty members voiced their reservations. On October 6, 2008, history professor Allen Wells “commented that the new policy to include a faculty member from outside the searching department ‘is asking a lot.’”⁴⁰⁵ On April 6, 2009, government professor Paul Franco “expressed concern that the outside person assigned to a search committee would not necessarily be from a closely related field. He also was wary of added bureaucracy ‘for not much different outcome.’”⁴⁰⁶

Wells and Franco’s concerns resonated with many faculty members (though, significantly, none who are currently willing to speak on the record), but others defended the Faculty Diversity Committee’s surveillance regime. On May 4, 2009, associate professor of history Patrick Rael said, “[T]he group’s vision was to affect the search process at every stage.”⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³“Faculty Recruitment Procedures 2012–2013,” 5.

⁴⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁰⁵Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, October 6, 2008, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁴⁰⁶Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, April 6, 2009, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁴⁰⁷Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 4, 2009, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

Efforts to Make the College’s Minority Recruitment Look Successful

Efforts to achieve racial and ethnic diversity on Bowdoin’s faculty have fallen short of what President Mills and many of the faculty have hoped for. This doesn’t mean abject failure. The Africana studies department, for example, has four tenure-track faculty members, three of which are of African descent: Olufemi Vaughan was appointed in 2008, Judith Casselberry was appointed in 2009, and Brian Purnell was appointed in 2010.

Bowdoin has indeed appointed many “people of color” (Bowdoin’s term) to faculty positions. According to the Common Data Set, in 2011–2012, the Bowdoin faculty included thirty full-time and seven part-time minority faculty members (out of 182 full-time and forty part-time faculty members). In 2001, there were seventeen full-time minority faculty members (out of 151) and four part-time (out of thirty-five). The percentage of the full-time faculty made up of minorities in 2001 was 11.3 percent; in 2011 it was 16.5 percent. Over that ten-year period, the overall number of full-time faculty increased by 20.5 percent, while the number of full-time minority faculty members grew by 76.4 percent. The share of new faculty positions filled by minority candidates (thirteen of thirty-one) during this period was 41.9 percent—a hugely disproportionate number, especially in light of the scarcity of qualified applicants.

Bowdoin has taken a few steps to make the college appear even more successful in promoting faculty diversity. For example, it participates in the Consortium for Faculty Diversity in Liberal Arts Colleges—a feeder program of minority pre- and postdoctoral fellows to liberal arts institutions seeking to boost their number of minority faculty members and remain free of the financial commitment of providing a tenure-line position. This enables Bowdoin to rotate minority faculty members in and out based on the college’s immediate curricular needs while superficially increasing its diversity numbers. According to Bowdoin’s 2011 *NEASC Fifth Year Report*, the college “created a cohort of six additional pre- and postdoctoral fellows through the Consortium for Faculty Diversity.”⁴⁰⁸

VII. Sustainability

“Bowdoin’s main buzzword is probably ‘sustainability,’ and green efforts seem to permeate all parts of campus life.”⁴⁰⁹ That’s the judgment of Danica Loucks, author of *Bowdoin College Off the Record*, 2012 edition, part of a “College Prowler” series of formulaic guides for high school students who want an insider’s view of particular colleges. Loucks, a senior, is featured on the pages devoted to sustainability on Bowdoin’s website, where she avows: “I believe helping people know nature and their inevitable interconnectedness with it encourages respect and responsibility for the environment.”⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸Bowdoin College, *New England Association of Schools and Colleges Fifth Year Report* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College 2011), 28.

⁴⁰⁹Danica Loucks, *Bowdoin College: Off the Record* (Pittsburgh: College Prowler, 2011), 34.

⁴¹⁰“Danica Loucks: Class of 2013,” Bowdoin College, Sustainability, February 23, 2011, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/activity/2011/profiles/danica-loucks.shtml>.

Loucks was writing well before the emergence of the student-led movement that has called on Bowdoin to divest from companies in the energy sector that produce fossil fuels. In fall 2012 and spring 2013, this part of a national program promoted by a group called 350.org rallied Bowdoin students. In December 2012, 470 Bowdoin students signed a petition calling on the college to divest.⁴¹¹ More on that below.

We have examined Bowdoin’s enthusiasm for sustainability in two previous sections of this report: “Academic Instruction,” under “Environmental Studies,” and “Key Concepts,” under “The Common Good.” Sustainability at Bowdoin these days is indeed conceived of as part of the common good. President Mills, as discussed, interpreted the common good in his 2006 baccalaureate address as a mandate for sustainability, which he described as one of the “enduring values and principles that are right and proper for Bowdoin to be committed to as a college.”⁴¹²

As we have also discussed, “sustainability” as an updated and encompassing reformulation of environmentalism was popularized by the 1987 publication of *Our Common Future*, a report from the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development. That document, often referred to as the *Brundtland Report*, established a definition of sustainability that remains in wide use:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.⁴¹³

Bowdoin writers and speakers on the topic often cite this definition. Keisha Payson, coordinator for Sustainable Bowdoin, told us:

As of right now the college hasn’t adopted an “official” definition. I usually refer to the Brundtland Commission Report definition.⁴¹⁴

Bowdoin’s involvement with the environmentalist movement dates back to the 1960s, when the college created its first courses dealing with “environmental problems.” The environmental studies program was created in 1970.⁴¹⁵ The topic remained salient over the years. In 1994, George Mitchell (Class of 1954), former democratic senator (D) from Maine (1980 to 1995), gave a speech at an Environmental Institute Conference held in celebration of the bicentennial of Bowdoin’s 1794 charter. Mitchell effused on the connection between the environment and “learning”:

Learning to live with the natural world is a lifetime process. Our scientific knowledge is

⁴¹¹Marisa McGarry, “Mills Says College Will Not Divest from Fossil Fuels,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 7, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7814>.

⁴¹²Barry Mills, “Baccalaureate ’06,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, May 27, 2006, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2006/baccalaureate-06.shtml>.

⁴¹³World Commission on Environment and Development, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* (United Nations: NGO Committee on Education, 1987), 34, <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>.

⁴¹⁴Keisha Payson, email message to Michael Toscano, March 6, 2012.

⁴¹⁵*Bowdoin College Bulletin 1970–1971*, 87.

still in its infancy. And each piece of information we learn reveals the many pieces we do not know.⁴¹⁶

Mitchell was especially interested in coastal geography, given Maine's abundance of shoreline:

The world's oceans contain about 97 percent of all the water on our planet. They cover three-quarters of the earth's surface. Their surface temperatures change the temperatures of the air above them and so affect the climate of the world.

One third of the world's population lives within 37 miles of a coastline. Many millions more live within an easy day's travel of coastlines. The majority of the earth's 5.5 billion people live around the coastal fringes of the continents....

...Almost ninety-nine percent of commercially valuable fish are caught within 200 miles of a coastline. Coastal environments are enormous sanctuaries for migratory birds. They are catchment areas for river sediments which would be dispersed in the oceans if they were not trapped by marsh grasses and other plants.⁴¹⁷

Mitchell emphasized that the ocean connects Maine to the rest of the world. The theme of interconnectedness, of course, is the central trope of the environmental movement. Danica Loucks, the Bowdoin senior quoted above, likewise extols "the inevitable interconnectedness" of people and the environment.

In his speech, Mitchell also touched on another key environmentalist trope: that every local environmental issue is "integral" to the whole globe: "Paying attention to the oceans means paying attention to the entire environment because the oceans are a huge and integral part of the world's environment."⁴¹⁸ The importance of this conceit over time is that it encourages the idea that very small and probably trivial steps towards conservation can be rhetorically magnified as world-changing events.

Mitchell was drawing on an already well-established line of metaphoric thinking often presented as "science." For example, in 1983, Allen Springer, a faculty member in Bowdoin's government and legal studies department, published *The International Law of Pollution: Protecting the Global Environment in a World of Sovereign States*, which begins by conjuring an image of Earth's "biosphere" as seen from the Apollo photographs taken from the Moon and articulating the theme of humanity's "'dependent' position...in the interlocking web of global ecology."⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶Excerpts from: Statement of Senator George Mitchell Bowdoin College Bicentennial Environmental Institute Conference April 6, 1994," The George J. Mitchell Papers, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME. <http://library.bowdoin.edu/arch/george-j-mitchell/speeches/bowdoin-bicentennial-environmental-institute-conference.shtml>.

⁴¹⁷Ibid.

⁴¹⁸Ibid.

⁴¹⁹Allen Springer, *The International Law of Pollution: Protecting the Global Environment in a World of Sovereign States* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1983), 3.

Bowdoin's Environmental Missions

In 2002, Bowdoin published an “Environmental Mission Statement,” which it replaced with a substantially new statement in 2009. The differences between the two statements are arresting. The 2002 statement asserted:

The environment within and beyond Bowdoin College is one of the fundamental aspects of our community and one that we, as members of the College, have in common. . . . Both the institution as a whole and individuals in the Bowdoin community have an impact on the environment and therefore should commit themselves to understanding their personal responsibility for the local and natural environment.

It cited “the common good” as the reason why:

Bowdoin recognizes its responsibility to take a leadership role in environmental stewardship by promoting environmental awareness, local action, and global thinking. Because sustainability reaches beyond the Bowdoin campus, choices made by the College in its operations shall consider economic, environmental, and social impacts.

And it summoned “members of the Bowdoin community” to a “campus-wide environmental ethic” and to “conduct research and teaching in a sustainable and responsible fashion.” The mission?

Being mindful of our use of the Earth’s natural resources, we are committed to leading by example to integrate environmental awareness and responsibility throughout the college community. The College shall seek to encourage conservation, recycling, and other sustainable practices in its daily decision making processes, and shall take into account, in the operations of the College, all appropriate economic, environmental, and social concerns.⁴²⁰

To fulfill this mission, Bowdoin committed to three broad initiatives: “Sustainable Awareness,” “Sustainable Education,” and “Sustainable Policy.”

The 2002 statement articulated what looks like a very strong policy, but by 2009 Bowdoin judged it to be too weak. The 2009 statement likewise cited the common good and the need for the Bowdoin community to pull together in the name of environmental responsibility to Maine and the world, but it adopted a strident new tone and a sense of urgency:

This reaffirmation by the College of long-held principles comes at a time when the consequences of inaction are no longer abstract or shrouded in uncertainty. Although study and deliberation must continue, our accumulated knowledge about the effects of climate change demands the identification and implementation of effective solutions that will protect the environment while advancing economic development and security here

⁴²⁰“Environmental Mission Statement,” *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2002–2003*, 346.

and abroad. It is clear that we must conduct ourselves in a manner that meets our needs today without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own.⁴²¹

The 2002 statement does not mention climate or climate change. In the years between the two statements, President Mills made Bowdoin a signatory to the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment in 2007. In 2009, Bowdoin issued its "Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan," committing the college to become carbon-neutral by the year 2020.⁴²² Also by 2009, numerous voices in the scientific community were being raised in contradiction to the prematurely announced "scientific consensus on global warming." By signing the Climate Commitment, Mills had foreclosed debate on this matter. The commitment opens with this declaration:

We, the undersigned presidents and chancellors of colleges and universities, are deeply concerned about the unprecedented scale and speed of global warming and its potential for large-scale, adverse health, social, economic and ecological effects. We recognize the *scientific consensus* that global warming is real and is largely being caused by humans.⁴²³ (emphasis added)

By this point, however, Michael Mann's famous "hockey stick" graph purporting to show an extreme spike in global temperature had come under skeptical scrutiny, beginning with questions from Canadian researcher Steve McIntyre.⁴²⁴ The theory of global warming significantly caused by human activity was under scientific consult from other quarters as well.⁴²⁵

The rise of scientific skepticism about the "scientific consensus" over global warming caused consternation among many advocates of the theory, who often responded with furious rhetoric aimed at undermining the credibility of the critics. In effect, the proponents of the movement redoubled their assertions that the matter was beyond any *legitimate* scientific doubt.

Bowdoin's 2009 "Environmental Mission Statement" reflects this new vehemence. It "reaffirms" Bowdoin's position and specifically denies the existence of "uncertainty." In adopting this "no uncertainty" approach, Bowdoin was choosing against another response to climate change skeptics that had been taken up by many academic supporters of the theory: the so-called "precautionary principle" or "prudential argument." This is the view that, even in the absence of certainty, it is wiser to take remedial steps as though human activity is causing

⁴²¹"Environmental Mission Statement," Bowdoin College, Sustainability Office, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/statements/mission-statement.shtml>.

⁴²²"Bowdoin College: Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan," rev. October 22, 2009, American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment, ACUPCC Reporting System, http://rs.acupcc.org/site_media/uploads/cap/339-cap.pdf.

⁴²³"Text of the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment," American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment, <http://www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org/about/commitment>.

⁴²⁴A.W. Montford, *The Hockey Stick Illusion: Climategate and the Corruption of Science* (London: Stacey International, 2010).

⁴²⁵See, for example, Roy W. Spencer, *Climate Confusion* (New York: Encounter Books, 2008), and Patrick J. Michaels and Robert C. Balling, Jr., *Climate of Extremes* (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2009).

significant global warming, since the consequences of inaction could be catastrophic. This idea had originally been put forward at the 1992 “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro, as “Principle 15”:

In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.⁴²⁶

In its 2009 statement, Bowdoin opted for asserting its certainty about climate change in the face of both scientific critics and advocates of a more agnostic approach.

Sustainability and Students

Bowdoin students encounter the sustainability movement in a variety of ways. As Danica Loucks put it, sustainability permeates all aspects of campus life. It is part of the curriculum, formally organized student activities, Residential Life, off-campus volunteering, eating in Bowdoin’s dining halls, listening to President Mills’s elocutions, and part of everyday conversation. Bowdoin has sustainability vanguards among the students—i.e., individuals who passionately champion the ideals of the movement—and sustainability followers.

While the Bowdoin administration has put its weight fully behind sustainability and eco-activism, much of the enthusiasm for these “green initiatives” is generated by the students. According to the May 1, 2006, faculty minutes, President Mills reported that he had been presented with a petition “concerning green energy” signed by “about 700 people.” Mills then met with twenty-five students to discuss the substance of the petition: “The discussion was interesting and sometimes heated.”⁴²⁷ The minutes record:

President Mills was enormously impressed by the passion and conviction of the students; but he was concerned about their inability to delve beyond the veneer of the issue. He was disappointed at the level of thought and sophistication that had gone into the proposal. It isn’t enough to say, “we’re coming with the passion; now you figure it out.”

Mills was unsure exactly what the students were asking of him, so he gave them an assignment:

[He] gave them specific questions about energy credits. He asked them to get the contracts that other institutions had signed, and they were to read and summarize the contracts, noting the costs and benefits.

But Mills did not mean his question to throw cold water on the students’ enthusiasm. He assured the faculty:

⁴²⁶“Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,” United Nations Environment Programme, 1992, <http://www.unep.org/Documents.multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=78&ArticleID=1163>.

⁴²⁷Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 1, 2006, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

[W]e have done and will continue to do a huge amount of work to be more energy efficient. There is still a long way to go. It is vitally important to the college, the state, the town, and society as a whole.

And he explained that his homework assignment to the students was not a stalling tactic but an educational exercise:

The college personnel could, of course, do this, but that then there would be no educational benefit to the people who are passionately in favor of this.⁴²⁸

Mills's resistance was token. The students were pushing on an open door.

Seven days later the students returned, and this time Mills was fully satisfied: "The students answered every question he had asked in a nearly complete way."⁴²⁹ His satisfaction yielded immediate results, as he explained to the faculty:

President Mills said that the College had a press conference that day with the local newspapers to announce, due to the work of the students, that we have made a commitment to buy clean energy for the next three years.... This achievement by the College puts us at the forefront of colleges and universities in thinking of the environment.⁴³⁰

Sometimes Mills likes to attribute Bowdoin's enthusiasm for sustainability solely to the desires of the student body, as he did in 2009 when he said, "Our students have led this campus in sustainability efforts and awareness in energetic and substantive ways that have affected the life of Bowdoin."⁴³¹ But this is at most a partial truth. The Bowdoin administration had begun to promote the sustainability agenda well before Bowdoin students in any significant number had taken it up. Mills had either the good luck of finding the students spontaneously rising to a cause he had enunciated or the shrewdness to let students who were responding to his prompts think they were forcing the issue.

In fact, Bowdoin had a long history of conservation initiatives. From 1978 to 1984 Bowdoin received three grants from the Department of Energy for "energy conservation measures." In 1985, Bowdoin began using an "energy management system." In 1991, Bowdoin retrofitted its lighting in order to save "45,000 kilowatt-hours." And as discussed, Bowdoin adopted its first "Environmental Mission Statement" in 2002. In 2003, the college switched fuel oil for campus heating in order to produce "57 percent (46 tons) less emissions of sulfur

⁴²⁸Ibid.

⁴²⁹Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 22, 2006, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁴³⁰Ibid.

⁴³¹Barry Mills, "Convocation 2009 Welcome: President Barry Mills," *Campus News*, September 2, 2009, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1bowdoincampus/006588.shtml>.

dioxide.”⁴³² Again in 2003, Bowdoin had committed “to apply for LEED certification for all new campus buildings.” According to its sustainability page on the Bowdoin website, “Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is the authoritative standard for green design developed by the U.S. Green Building Council in 2000.”⁴³³ Compliance is incredibly expensive.⁴³⁴

The petition from 700 students—roughly 40 percent of the student body—gave additional weight and legitimacy to the college’s environmental commitments, but it cannot quite explain the institutional scale and financial magnitude of Bowdoin’s efforts. Environmentalism and sustainability are common ground for the students, administration, staff, and faculty.

After Mills signed the Climate Commitment in 2007 and Bowdoin pledged in 2009 to become “carbon neutral” by 2020, environmentalism took on an increased urgency at the college. Carbon neutrality, especially, united campus environmentalist organizations and pitched them toward the achievement of a single goal. These enthusiasts set out to foster greater engagement among the rest of the students. The Sustainability Office’s “Eco-Rep Program” sent out students—Eco-Reps—to reform the campus. Each residence hall has an Eco-Rep whose job is to sort through trash bags to determine how well students in the hall are recycling. This is the annual “trash audit.” They promote “Dan the Can,” Bowdoin’s recycling mascot.⁴³⁵ They organize the “Dorm Energy Competition,” convene “Eco Service Day,” and guide “fun field trips” to the Bowdoin Organic Garden, the Brunswick Farmers’ Market, and the Brunswick landfill.⁴³⁶

There are also several student clubs devoted solely to environmentalism and sustainability. The Green Bowdoin Alliance is the “go-to student environmental group” that works on “political activism, changing student behavior, and dining-related issues.”⁴³⁷ Green Global Initiatives “recognizes that Climate Change is one of the most pressing issues that our generation faces,” and brings speakers to campus to “network with students on ‘green’ jobs.”⁴³⁸

⁴³²“Building Sustainable Programs: Campus Sustainability Report,” January 2007 update, U.S. EPA New England Best Management Practices for Colleges and Universities, Bowdoin College Campus Profile, <http://www.epa.gov/region1/assistance/univ/pdfs/bmps/BowdoinSustainabilityReport1-8-07.pdf>.

⁴³³“LEED Certification,” Bowdoin College, Sustainability, Buildings and Grounds, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/buildings-grounds/leed-certification.shtml>.

⁴³⁴According to a February 8, 2013 article in the *Orient*, “at least ten percent” of the cost of two capital projects, which totaled \$93 million, was “efficiency related,” an allusion to the cost of LEED compliance. Garrett Casey and Linda Kinstler, “1.4 Percent of College’s Endowment Invested in Fossil Fuels,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 8, 2013, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7954>.

⁴³⁵We are not sure if Dan the Can and his consort Jan the Can are currently active, but the Bowdoin Sustainability Office still promotes the couple and has a seven-minute video celebrating their recycling exploits.

⁴³⁶“ES Newsletter Week of April 25, 2011,” Bowdoin College, Environmental Studies, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/environmental-studies/activity/pdf/2010-2011/april-25-2011-newsletter.pdf>.

⁴³⁷“Student Involvement,” Bowdoin College, Sustainability, Student Involvement, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/student-involvement/index.shtml>.

⁴³⁸*Ibid.*

The Evergreens sponsor “forums on environmental issues,” assist “in campus greening efforts,” and organize Earth Week events.⁴³⁹

In July 2012, environmental activist Bill McKibben published an article in *Rolling Stone*, “Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math,” which kicked off a campaign in conjunction with McKibben’s organization 350.org to leave 80 percent of the world’s reserves of oil, coal, and gas underground.⁴⁴⁰ The idea is that the only way to undo global warming is to roll back carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to the pre-Industrial Revolution level of 350 parts per million. To that end, the movement is calling on colleges and universities to divest their holdings in fossil fuel companies.

The movement caught on quickly at many colleges and universities, including Harvard, where in November 2012, 72 percent of participating Harvard undergraduates voted to call on their administration to divest. Bowdoin was not far behind. In December 2012, McKibben tweeted: “At Bowdoin, where the mascot is a polar bear, the divestment drive is underway.”⁴⁴¹ That month 470 Bowdoin students signed a petition calling on the administration to divest. Currently 1.4 percent of Bowdoin’s endowment is invested in fossil fuel companies. President Mills responded that he would not divest—but added he would “never say never.”⁴⁴² Judging by responses in the *Bowdoin Orient*, however, the student body understood Mills as saying that Bowdoin would not ever divest.⁴⁴³

Mills clearly finds himself in a difficult situation with this movement. For nearly a decade he has been an outspoken proponent of Bowdoin’s efforts to combat global warming, but in this case his advocacy for that cause runs squarely against his efforts to build Bowdoin’s financial situation through successful investment of the college’s endowment. The campus movement that he helped to create and further has turned around to declare Mills an obstacle to its next goal. As an alumnus, Scott Budde (Class of 1981), put it in a letter to the *Bowdoin Orient*:

The administration’s response to the fossil fuel divestment proposal...publicly confirmed that Bowdoin’s official strategy is to maintain investment policies with no regard for

⁴³⁹“The Evergreens,” Bowdoin College, Environmental Studies Resources, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/environmental-studies/resources/the-evergreens.shtml>.

⁴⁴⁰Bill McKibben, “Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math,” *Rolling Stone*, July 19, 2012, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719>.

⁴⁴¹Bill McKibben, Twitter posting, December 12, 2012, <https://twitter.com/billmckibben/status/278868173997080577>.

⁴⁴²Marisa McGarry, “Mills Says College Will Not Divest from Fossil Fuels,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 7, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7814>.

⁴⁴³See, for example, Ben Richmond, “Divesting of Fossil Fuels for Ethical Endowment Growth,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 24, 2013, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7839>.

environmental issues, while promoting its environmental achievements to alumni, students and grant agencies.⁴⁴⁴

Of course, getting a college to divest of its holdings in oil, coal, and natural gas companies would do nothing to impede or halt fossil fuel production. The campaign has far more to do with building ideological antipathy for fossil fuels among college students than it does with changing national environmental policy.⁴⁴⁵ But Mills has repeatedly embraced sustainability measures that are far more symbolic than substantive, and it is difficult for him now to draw that distinction.⁴⁴⁶

Bowdoin Climate Action has posted to its Facebook page “Divest Now!” a promotional video for divestment that in a medley of voices makes clear that the movement involves more than lowering carbon dioxide in the atmosphere:

By fighting the fossil fuel industries we are not only fighting climate change but the racism, classism, and imperialism that they perpetuate.⁴⁴⁷

Joining a panel that included the executive director of Maine’s chapter of the Sierra Club and as a guest of Bowdoin Climate Action, McKibben spoke at Bowdoin on February 23, 2013, to promote his divestment campaign. As of that date, 256 colleges and universities had formed student groups that called for such divestment.⁴⁴⁸

Student Sacrifice

The Bowdoin Student Government (BSG) has become increasingly involved in sustainability. At the end of the 2010–2011 academic year, BSG changed the name of the “Vice President for Facilities” to the “Vice President for Facilities and Sustainability.” Isa Abney (Class of 2011), the vice president who proposed the title change, told the *Bowdoin Orient* that “It would make sustainability an integral part of the vice president’s job.”⁴⁴⁹ Recently, BSG has published “50 Sustainable Things to Do Before You Graduate.” Suggestions range from “Get to

⁴⁴⁴Scott Budde, “Administration’s ‘Misinformed’ Response to Divestment Raises More Questions than Answers,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 13, 2013, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7968>.

⁴⁴⁵See Stanley Kurtz, “Fossil-Fuel Divestment,” *National Review Online*, March 4, 2013, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/341991/fossil-fuel-divestment-stanley-kurtz>.

⁴⁴⁶For instance, Ben Richmond (Class of 2013), in a March 28, 2013 *Orient* article, criticized the Bowdoin administration for its unwillingness to divest. Richmond listed divestment among other things he thought that the college failed to do to achieve “carbon neutrality”: “When will the College start implementing plans for Solar Photovoltaic projects on our campus, referenced in the 2009 carbon neutrality plan but indefinitely stalled? When will Bowdoin buy more electric cars? When will the College join the movement to divest its endowment from fossil fuels?” Ben Richmond, “Bowdoin Carbon-Neutrality Plan Taking the Easy Way Out with Low-Impact RECS,” *Bowdoin Orient*, March 28, 2013, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/8102>.

⁴⁴⁷March Forth, “Divest Now!” 1:16, YouTube video, March 19, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl8svpYypwE>.

⁴⁴⁸Kurtz, “Fossil-Fuel Development.”

⁴⁴⁹Peter Davis, “BSG Convenes for Final Meeting of the Spring,” *Bowdoin Orient*, May 6, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6457>.

know your dorm's EcoRep – or better yet, become an Eco-Rep!” to “Go a week without using a car; Brunswick is very walker/biker friendly!”⁴⁵⁰

The BSG minutes of February 11, 2009, record an exchange about the implications of Bowdoin's “carbon neutral pledge.”⁴⁵¹ “Mary” stated her support for Bowdoin's pledge, but saw that much important work was to be done. She said, “the next step will be student sacrifice.” The BSG “brainstormed” lingering questions that the student body might have:

Kristen: this is general, but the term sustainability gets thrown around a lot by everyone, but how do you define sustainability by the individual vs institution?

Sophia: yeah and also like *why* be sustainable?

Nyle: a lot of people don't really understand repercussions of global warming, it would be cool to present real damages of global warming, especially in developing countries.

Greg: bring a dead polar bear (there's a couple on campus).

Sam: the library goes through something like 5 million papers a year—we're going to make a fact sheet.

Greg: I don't understand why they make us print out long readings.

Sam: it goes back to the sacrifice.

Nyle: there can be a fact about how much money you can make by recycling cans.

Ian: we can provide some of the financial benefits to sustainability, why it makes sense to make these investments now.

John: for professors and everyone, how can sustainability be brought into the classroom and be made relevant?⁴⁵² (emphasis in original)

The minutes of this meeting do not record a single instance of a student voicing skepticism about Bowdoin's “Carbon Neutral Pledge” or any aspect of the sustainability agenda at large. Their only concerns were how best to enhance the college's efforts and, to that end, how to promote “student sacrifice.”

As discussed, Bowdoin's administration was eager to cultivate this spirit of sacrifice. The college's 2009 “Climate Neutrality Implementation Plan” identified established patterns of student behavior as a major hurdle to achieving carbon neutrality. The plan called for ways to inculcate “behavioral change,” such as using the psychology department to discover how best to

⁴⁵⁰“50 Sustainable Things to Do Before You Graduate,” Bowdoin Student Government, Bowdoin College, Sustainability, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/pdf/50sustainablethings.pdf>.

⁴⁵¹Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, Bowdoin College, February 11, 2009, http://students.bowdoin.edu/bsg/files/2012/09/packet_090211-February-11-20091.pdf.

⁴⁵²Ibid.

“motivate” students to adopt the preferred changes. This theme of inducing behavioral modification continued in follow-up reports.

On April 25, 2011, the Faculty Working Group on Sustainability presented an “Interim Report” to the Faculty. The report is a highly-detailed account of the group’s efforts to “Develop ways to build a campus culture that includes sustainability as a core principle.”⁴⁵³ The longest section by far is a list of suggestions for how to convince students to “contribute to energy/emissions reductions,” including:

- Sustainability and carbon neutrality should become better integrated into the first-year experience, so that new students understand the importance of sustainability at Bowdoin and meeting the 2020 carbon neutrality goal.
- Faculty panels could discuss what climate change and carbon neutrality means to them in terms of research, teaching, and campus life.
- Peer-to-peer mentoring (i.e., having seniors discuss their experiences in helping the College reduce energy).
- Campus experiences built around sustainability (pre-O[rientation] trips and alternative spring breaks). Leaders of pre-orientation trips might consider reflection time that involves discussions of what students can do to reduce energy usage.
- Branding Carbon neutrality with class identity (i.e., giving all first-year students a t-shirt with “Carbon Neutrality by 2020” logo on the front and “Class of 2015” on the back).
- Each incoming student class could be charged to take ownership of the emissions contributed during its four-year experience at Bowdoin.
- Use weekly proctor meetings in residence halls as a venue for discussing campus action. Make carbon neutrality a part of training these student leaders.
- Encourage carbon neutrality discussions as part of College (social) house programming.
- Encourage student programming at WBOR [Bowdoin’s radio station] and BCN [the Bowdoin Cable Network] to provide information on carbon neutrality efforts on campus, in Maine, and throughout the nation, and suggest ways for students to get involved.
- Consolidate student environmental organizations on campus and focus on the implementation of carbon neutrality at Bowdoin. This student group could be comprised of environmental leaders (and the BSG Facilities representative) and other

⁴⁵³Will Barkalow, “Working Group on Sustainability: Interim Report to Faculty,” Bowdoin College, April 25, 2011, posted on Green Bowdoin, Google Group, <https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups=#!topic/green-bowdoin/KtAdAx9-1EQ>.

applicants who meet regularly to discuss carbon neutrality, develop ways to engage students, and communicate regularly with other student steering committees.

The Working Group on Sustainability concluded its interim report with a subtle recognition that the students were not yet the driving force behind Bowdoin's sustainability efforts:

We are working under the assumption that carbon neutrality *will become* a bottom-up, community driven venture and that after the 2011–2012 academic year, the efforts and programs *will become* self sustaining with the help of all faculty, staff, and students.⁴⁵⁴ (emphases added)

This “assumption”—more accurately, this hope—that the pursuit of carbon neutrality will become a “bottom-up” project at Bowdoin follows directly after a list of numerous (presumably top-down) *administrative* contributors to the initiative:

- Finance and Administration climate action plan subcommittee
- Sustainable Bowdoin and the Office/Student Eco Rep Program
- Environmental Studies Program
- Residential Life
- Information Technology
- Career Planning
- Office of Student Affairs
- Office of Academic Affairs
- Office of the President
- McKeen Center for the Common Good
- Athletics
- Dining Services
- Student organizations and BSG
- BAS [Bowdoin Administrative Staff]/SSAC [Support Staff Advocacy Committee]
- Institutional Research
- Communications/Public Affairs⁴⁵⁵

For the time being, the working group was comfortable with the top-down approach.

Climate Days and True Believers

On April 1, 2009, President Mills sent a letter to “Members of the Bowdoin Community,” urging them to participate in Climate Days, a two-day program that he saw as part of Bowdoin's commitment “to educating our community and promoting sustainability on campus.” Mills explained:

⁴⁵⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵Ibid.

Next week's events—which include a climate fair in Smith Union, a locavore dinner in Thorne, a Common Hour presentation on green jobs and the green economy by Majora Carter, a new environmental mission statement for the College, and a contest aimed at reducing Bowdoin's greenhouse gases—are designed to commence this important discussion and to encourage greater participation in Bowdoin's sustainability efforts.

Mills lamented the long road ahead:

It is clear that Bowdoin still has significant work to do in order to meet our sustainability commitments.

But he urged “active interest and participation,” seeing that as the key by which “the College can make substantial progress toward our goals.”⁴⁵⁶

The motto for Climate Days, featured on banners and posters throughout campus, was “We're Committed. Are You?” The motto and Mills's letter conferred moral urgency, but the organizers of Climate Days could not avoid some of the more fatuous conceits of the movement, culminating with “Greenstock,” a night of “recyclable art” and “folk music” where students learned how to make organic granola and tie-dye shirts.⁴⁵⁷

The program's most significant event, however, was a talk by Majora Carter, founder of Sustainable South Bronx.⁴⁵⁸ In his introduction of Carter, Mills spoke about Bowdoin's commitment “to the environment, sustainability, and these issues.” Describing sustainability as “fundamental,” he explained:

Somehow we know as part of this college that the environment, and our environment, and the issues related to it, are what this college is about.

Bowdoin has been committed to “these issues,” Mills said, “through its history.” But “particularly in its recent history”:

[W]e have decided at the college that at this time in our history, linked to our commitment to the common good—because there is no issue more important linked to the common good than our sense of our environment—that it's important for this college to recommit itself; recommit itself to the issues related to our environment.

Mills described Bowdoin as a community of “true believers.” These “true believers,” he asserted, cannot keep this truth to themselves, “because talking to ourselves is not sufficient.” The “true

⁴⁵⁶Barry Mills, “Climate Days,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, April 1, 2009, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/letters/2009/climate-days.shtml>.

⁴⁵⁷Shelley Barren and Emily Guerin, “Greenstock Perpetuates Reductionist Stereotypes,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 10, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4315>.

⁴⁵⁸“Environmental Justice Leader Majora Carter Wraps Up Climate Days,” Bowdoin College, Sustainability, September 28, 2009, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/activity/2009/majora-carter.shtml>. Full audio of Majora Carter's talk, “Green Jobs and the Green Economy,” is available at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/common-hour-audio/id429496124>. All citations from this introduction and talk are taken from this source, as transcribed by Michael Toscano.

believers” must spread the word “to the folks who, at least to this point, don’t have these issues at the forefront of their mind.” He added:

It’s also important for our neighbors here in Brunswick to understand our commitment. And it’s important for people far and away from this college, who’ve looked to this college for leadership and as a model, to understand that our commitment to the environment is deep and enduring, based on facts and rigor, and with passion.

Mills then welcomed Majora Carter to speak on “Green Jobs and the Green Economy.”

Carter opened with, “I have a question for you guys. How many of you have been in love?” Her theme was that mere words cannot capture the ineffable and transcendent beauty of what the sustainability movement aims to achieve:

I bring up love, or our capacity to be in it, and our willingness to want to be in it, because when you think about the word “sustainability” most folk think that it’s kind of like the absolute pinnacle of where we’re supposed to be....[W]e now have an opportunity to think about what kind of beautiful world [we can] build....[W]ords like “sustainable,” and “green,” and “clean” actually don’t even come close to the world which we want to create.

Carter’s tone, if not her actual words, echoed the Transcendentalist movement of Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. She presented “sustainability” in the same kind of rhetorical breathlessness that once drew Bowdoin alumnus Nathaniel Hawthorne to join the ill-fated Brook Farm utopian community, which he later satirized in *The Blithedale Romance*. Carter’s call for “environmental justice” is a fairly direct descendent of Brook Farm communitarianism. She declared that sustainability is about something more fundamental than “saving the environment.” It is about “building communities.” Carter envisioned a community in which each citizen’s psychological need to “contribute” is satisfied: “So the way that we’re trying to build communities is about everyone feeling as though they actually have something to contribute.” This is crucial for Carter, because:

[W]hen it doesn’t happen, that’s when bad things happen. But when it does happen, that’s when beautiful things blossom and flourish.

Dependence on fossil fuels, according to Carter, undermines nearly all aspects of communal life:

[We] know that the kind of pollution sources that are based in the fossil fuel-emission-based economy are the kind of things that actually serve to disconnect us in a lot of ways.

This criticism of fossil fuel economics is a well-rehearsed theme in the sustainability movement, but is probably still unfamiliar to most Americans. Pollution is bad not only because it makes the air we breathe unhealthy or because it harms plants and animals, but because the production and use of fossil fuels that create this “kind of” pollution foster patterns of social relations that Carter

deplores. Extractive industries in a market economy cut against the old forms of mutual dependence:

There used to be, whether you lived in a farm or a rural area, there were things that you had to do together. People knew the folks that made the products that they bought, or they were fairly close by. The food that was eaten was actually grown by folks that lived somewhere near by. There was a local economy. As a matter of fact, fifty, sixty years ago, everything we ate was organic. Now we need petroleum-based fertilizers—to put it in fertile soil so anything can grow. And all the result of the pollution-based economy that we have right now, the same things that have pulled us apart and have separated us, not only from the natural environment which we are a part of, but also from each other as well.

Carter offered “green economic development” and types of “horticultural technology” as alternatives, ones which could reunite communities with nature, communities with other communities, and communities with their own community members.

Much of Carter’s talk was anecdotal and autobiographical. It was storytelling. But she did offer several prescriptive solutions to both ecological and social injustice:

I do believe that we’ve got to bring nature back in a way to allow her to do what she did in the first place, which was help keep—regulate—temperatures on the planet, absorb storm water the way that it was supposed to be.... We’ve got to make sure that we’re putting that back in, so that we’re not stressing the traditional kind of infrastructure—the levees, the dams, and all that kind of stuff that we have—but we should be doing everything in our power to allow nature to do the things that it did. And those are also like the incredible green job capacities that we can develop as well.

These “green jobs” would not only serve to sustain the environment, but they would also help lift urban communities—such as Carter’s in the South Bronx—from poverty and psychological depression:

[I]f we knew that we could train people to do...work in urban forestry management, horticultural infrastructure, building green roofs, restoring some of our wetlands, doing all that work, than that would be a job, that would be the creating of a tax space, that would be a family that was stabilized, that would be the public health of that area, becoming improved. Because people who are not in depressed states of mind generally can take better care of themselves.

This economic and emotional lift would benefit society in general:

So the City itself would see municipal costs actually being lowered, because they would be lowering their incarceration rates, their lowering their public health cost, and we would see much more happier communities.

Carter concluded by likening her activism to the work of the civil rights movement: she declared her allegiance to “the work of Dr. King,” she discouraged the audience from living in the economy of “our collective failures,” and she encouraged it instead—by promoting “green economic development”—to “build monuments to hope and possibility.”

Mills wrapped up Carter’s talk by calling it “the beginning of a conversation here at Bowdoin,” and invited his audience to attend an event on April 14 called “Green Jobs for the Future.”

Environmental Literacy and Environmental Studies

The “Interim Report” of the Working Group on Sustainability offered several suggestions on how sustainability could be incorporated into Bowdoin’s curriculum, one of which was “Canvass faculty for voluntary efforts to include these topics in their courses and curricula.”⁴⁵⁹ On May 2, 2011, Philip Camill, chair of the working group, presented an update to the faculty. The faculty minutes record that “Camill highlighted some of the group’s recommendations: to make the behavioral goals of the carbon neutrality plan visible and easy to understand.”⁴⁶⁰ Camill closed his comments by emphasizing “the need for buy-in from everyone in the campus community.” Almost two years earlier, on November 2, 2009, Camill’s message to the faculty was less forceful: “He welcomed faculty input on how to frame the environment as part of the liberal arts curriculum and to build a community excited about making a difference.”⁴⁶¹

While Prof. Camill requested “input” on how to incorporate the environment into the liberal arts, he already had well-developed thoughts on the matter. In the Summer 2009 *Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences Newsletter*, Camill focused on the need to promote environmental literacy in “Environmental Literacy and the Academy”:

Environmental literacy (EL) is one of the most important products of a liberal arts education in the twenty-first century.⁴⁶²

Camill preferred the Environmental Literacy Council’s definition of “EL”:

Environmental literacy requires a fundamental understanding of the systems of the natural world, the relationships and interactions between the living and the non-living environment, and the ability to deal sensibly with problems that involve scientific evidence, uncertainty, and economic, aesthetic, and ethical considerations. (p. 4)

⁴⁵⁹Barkalow, “Working Group on Sustainability.”

⁴⁶⁰Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 2, 2011, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁴⁶¹Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, November 2, 2009, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁴⁶²Philip Camill, “Environmental Literacy and the Academy,” *Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences Newsletter* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 4, <http://documents.clubexpress.com/documents.ashx?key=nNTZ2Xs4vYLhgLLUJTLgHQn8UX%2F6iJwqYILRjKGntmKOtSRlzRCaW2SWXV/GZOpMH0g5z0nMYv1eTJKSJ%2Bo5mw%3D%3D>. Further references to this work will be cited parenthetically within the text.

Camill considered some of the resistance from fellow faculty members to the adoption of an “EL general education requirement” to be “benign”—“competition for general education status with other competencies, such as science and languages”—but other forms of resistance were products of “hostility”—“EL requirements are construed as political activism” (4).

Recognizing that widespread adoption in American higher education of an EL general education requirement would be unlikely if not impossible, Camill imagined an alternative:

Environmental Studies and Sciences (ES&S) programs are often the focal point for environmental education and scholarship. It seems natural, then, for ES&S programs to deliver EL to the academic community. (p. 4)

From environmental studies programs environmental pedagogy could be distributed widely. What Camill described is, of course, much like his own environmental studies program at Bowdoin.

But, according to Camill, this role of environmental studies to teach EL creates a new problem that involves the wider academic community:

[G]iving ES&S responsibility for EL absolves the rest of campus from addressing it. Our disciplinary silos remain intact. (p. 4)

He offered a radical solution:

If, as many suspect, traditional, disciplinary structures produce graduates unprepared to meet the contemporary challenges of ecological sustainability, higher education needs to re-frame the disciplines. ES&S programs are certainly key to this conversation, but all disciplines need to be part of this transformation. (p. 4)

This is another sustainability idea that requires slow consideration. Environmental literacy, according to Camill, requires the “re-framing” of “the disciplines.” *All* of the disciplines? It appears so. From mathematics to the study of Homeric epics, from physics to the fine arts, the college curriculum needs to be “reframed” and “transformed” to bring it into alignment with “ecological sustainability.” The nature and scope of this call for change seems so excessive and unrealistic it’s difficult to imagine how anyone could and would advocate it, but that is what Camill and many other sustainability advocates have done.⁴⁶³

For Camill, however, a deeper, moral challenge far greater than disciplinary rigidity existed—and it lay within the environmental studies curriculum itself. As he saw it, environmental studies was unconsciously racist and classist. To this end, Camill cited Majora Carter, who had spoken at Bowdoin’s Climate Days a few months earlier:

⁴⁶³See, for example, Anthony D. Cortese, “Promises Made and Promises Lost: A Candid Assessment of Higher Education Leadership and the Sustainability Agenda,” in *The Sustainable University: Green Goals and New Challenges for Higher Education*, ed. James Martin, James E. Samels, and Associates (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 22.

The challenges of EL are also a problem of message and constituency. When we speak of educating students about the natural world, whose nature and what audience are we talking about?...It is likely that EL arising from first- or second-wave environmental thought, which focused on wilderness preservation and pollution prevention largely benefitting white, middle and upper classes, will be irrelevant, at best, and culturally insensitive, at worst, to many of our students of color and students from working-class backgrounds. Simply turning up the volume with more ES&S courses or general education requirements runs the risk of being ineffective if it fails to acknowledge the socioeconomic backgrounds of our students. As Majora Carter argues, we need to bring the environment to our students' lives rather than just bringing students to our classes. (p. 4–5)

To solve this problem Camill offered a number of “bottom-up approaches,” just as he hoped they would appear at Bowdoin in its fight for “carbon neutrality” (5).

Camill saw environmental literacy as a premier pedagogical concern. He deemed it a core intellectual competency like “writing, quantitative skills, and languages.” And he called it a “critical frame of analysis” equal “to race, class, and gender” (5).

Camill’s “Environmental Literacy and the Academy” is valuable as a distillation of the radical principles put forward by the sustainability movement in its drive to “transform” the curriculum. At Bowdoin, much of that transformation is already under construction.

The rendezvous point of this type of pedagogy is environmental studies. “Introduction to Environmental Studies,” for instance, is team-taught by a humanist, a social scientist, and a natural scientist. In addition to its intro course, the program features a number of courses taught by faculty from a wide swath of disciplines, including biology, economics, physics, English, Romance languages, music, government and legal studies, and Earth and oceanographic science—as well as courses offered by several faculty members with joint appointments in history, philosophy, chemistry, and Earth and oceanographic science. In the 2011–2012 academic year, twenty-nine of the program’s thirty-six courses were cross-listed. Furthermore, environmental studies is Bowdoin’s only major that requires students to graduate with a coordinate major, which means that a student cannot complete an environmental studies major unless he has also successfully completed another Bowdoin major. These features of the environmental studies program make it a reservoir for EL pedagogy where it is both gathered and distributed.

And as Camill advocated, other disciplines at Bowdoin are hastening to align their own curricular offerings with the EL vision. In fall 2011, for example, the economics department offered “The Economics of Land Use, Ecosystem Services, and Biodiversity,” the English department offered “Telling Environmental Stories,” and Romance languages offered “Ecological Thought in Latin American Literature.”

The intentions that underlie these curricular choices are fully reflected in the “Environmental Studies Mission Statement.”⁴⁶⁴ Its opening sentence begins with the same certainty of the 2007 Climate Commitment and the 2009 “Environmental Mission Statement”:

Responding wisely to the environmental challenges humanity is certain to face in the coming century will require collaboration among experts in many fields: elected officials, government staff, environmental advocates, business leaders, scientists, lawyers, consultants, architects, religious leaders and many other professionals.⁴⁶⁵

It quotes these “certain” challenges as the reason a wide body of experts is necessary. Likewise, the need for a wide body of experts makes the heavy cross-listings and the coordinate major necessary:

The challenges for environmental studies at Bowdoin are twofold: to encourage broad environmental literacy through course offerings and co-curricular activities available to all students, and to build a solid foundation for the diverse environmentally-related career paths many of our graduates will follow.⁴⁶⁶

The authors of the mission statement, however, are not satisfied with environmental studies students gaining a multidisciplinary capacity. They must also possess a certain frame of mind. Because the world is “interconnected” on every level, environmental studies graduates must be able to perceive their immediate circumstances and personal actions in a global context:

Some years ago Hazel Henderson urged environmentalists to, “Think globally, act locally.” However, as we come to understand the dense social and ecological webs that connect local actions with regional, national and international consequences—and especially as we confront new environmental challenges at a global scale—it becomes evident that environmental professionals and environmentally literate citizens must be prepared to think and act wisely at every level, from the local to the global.⁴⁶⁷

The environmental studies program calls this global awareness “environmental literacy.” It is this lofty form of rationality, and even ontology, that the program hopes its students will gain:

Environmental literacy requires more than a mastery of subject matter; ultimately, it is a way of thinking, experiencing, and acting.⁴⁶⁸

Professor Camill, however, is not alone among the Bowdoin professoriate to advance the cause of “environmental literacy.” According to the *Bowdoin Orient*, on April 2, 2013, at an event called “Reaching Day Zero: Living Sustainably at Bowdoin and Beyond,” Nat

⁴⁶⁴“Mission Statement,” Environmental Studies, Bowdoin College, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/environmental-studies/mission/index.shtml>.

⁴⁶⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸Ibid.

Wheelwright, professor of natural sciences, called for an environmental literacy distribution requirement.⁴⁶⁹ Wheelwright was speaking at the height of Bowdoin’s spring 2013 divestment controversy. He said, “we’re entering a new phase where the seriousness of environmental problems is becoming apparent to everyone.”⁴⁷⁰ Despite that, he averred, in the college’s efforts to fight climate change, Bowdoin was “being too cautious.”⁴⁷¹ Instead:

we need radical, bold thinking.... A distribution requirement makes a statement about the College’s values—a statement of the values of higher educational institutions.... The shared learning experience would create a conversation that we aren’t having now.... If all students had exposure, we could make change.⁴⁷²

Wheelwright called for divestment and criticized Bowdoin for failing to lead other institutions in the divestment movement. He said, “We’re losing the game to Middlebury, Oberlin, Unity.”⁴⁷³

On April 19, 2013, the *Orient* published an opinion editorial by Prof. Wheelwright which featured softer rhetoric and a retraction of his call for an EL distribution requirement.⁴⁷⁴ He cited “logistical problems such as staffing new courses,” which “adding a distribution requirement in environmental literacy” would cause, as the reason for his about-face.⁴⁷⁵ Nevertheless, even though he deemed a distribution requirement beyond Bowdoin’s reach, he remained resolute that Bowdoin should find some way to increase focus on EL pedagogy. He asked, “Do our students graduate with enough know-how and motivation to address the hugely serious environmental problems they will inherit?”⁴⁷⁶ He answered:

Ten years ago, when the Curriculum and Education Policy Committee was working on a new system of distribution requirements, a number of faculty argued that environmental literacy ought to be included. Today, 10 years deeper into an extinction crisis, and with our climate changing right before our eyes, it’s time for our curricular structure to catch up.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁶⁹Joe Sherlock, “Prof. Wheelwright Pushes for Environmental Studies Requirement,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 5, 2013, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/8170>.

⁴⁷⁰Ibid.

⁴⁷¹Ibid.

⁴⁷²Ibid.

⁴⁷³Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴Nat Wheelwright, “To Fulfill Offer of the College, We Should Divest,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 19, 2013, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/8273>.

⁴⁷⁵Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷Ibid.

Sustainability, Difference, and Diversity

Sustainability draws Bowdoin powerfully because it is a positive, unambiguous, and in many respects concrete ideal. It fills the void left by Bowdoin's abandonment, decades ago, of its religious and its traditional liberal arts missions. When Bowdoin discarded its structured curriculum in 1970 in favor of "liberation" and "student autonomy," it left faculty and students adrift in a sea of intellectual improvisation. The college had decreed that no common ground was necessary and that students should be free to devise their own education out of the parts at hand. The sense of liberation resulting from these changes was fleeting. Bowdoin soon recognized that students needed something in common besides a physical campus, but curricular entropy proved very difficult to reverse. Too many faculty members found the freedom to teach their specializations irresistible; too many students succumbed to the lure of self-invention. Efforts to restore curricular order to a Bowdoin education vacillated between rhetorical declarations about the importance of "liberal arts" and "core competencies," and half-hearted reforms such as the reintroduction of distribution requirements and the creation of First-Year Seminars.

These steps fell far short of answering the basic need among students to feel that their educations were something more than a collection of solo performances. It was no accident that Bowdoin's presidents reintroduced the conceit of "the common good." It was—or at least it sounded like—an appeal to something larger than individual whim. Yet it proved to be akin to a bass drum: loud but hollow. This was partly because the common good ran athwart another idea—actually two ideas—that had gained hold of Bowdoin's collective imagination: the idea of fostering "difference" for its own sake, and the idea of making "diversity" the focal point of student and faculty recruitment. The apotheosis of *difference* plainly cuts against the existence of any *common good*. Bowdoin's exegetes attempted a square-the-circle maneuver by insisting that "diversity" and "difference" could be the common good. The self-contradiction offered a springboard for "conversations" and "storytelling," but it left the deeper need unaddressed. The theatrical side of Bowdoin students might be appeased with duct tape "I-Am-Bowdoin" performances, but their minds cannot really rest with a contradiction. A community that simultaneously aspires to the common good *and* difference straddles a void. And it is a void that cannot be filled because it has made peace with contradiction.

Sustainability, as we said, fills this void. Or to change the metaphor, sustainability responds to the energy of fragmentation with a pull toward common purpose and single-mindedness. On one hand, Bowdoin promotes ideals of fissiparous identity, and a fluid curriculum that can be shaped to individual purpose. Sustainability flatly moves in the opposite direction, asking students to "sacrifice" personal autonomy in favor of an actually quantified collective good measured in pounds of carbon emissions. Moreover, sustainability replaces the radical indeterminacy of life in a community that rejects common standards of judgment with a set of radically objective standards of behavior—standards that measure individual worthiness down to the imponderable minutia of daily life: where to dispose of an errant scrap of paper,

what cup to drink from, and whether to flick off a light when talking on the phone. Nothing is too small to consider when weighing the fate of the Earth, and the miniscule becomes immense.

Sustainability sets implacable and insatiable goals one might think would be unattractive to students who place so high a value on their autonomy. That sense of autonomy, however, foments its own form of discontent. For a student who values self-empowerment, the prospect of belonging to a community where nothing really matters leaves a yearning for some standard of significance. This hunger can be answered from time to time by the chance to express outrage against those who are imagined to have transgressed the principles of respect for difference and diversity, but these opportunities are few and far between. Sustainability offers the regimen of daily observance and a form of personal asceticism. It can be omnipresent in one's own life and also offers a legitimate reason for being vigilant about the activities of one's neighbors. In sustainability, Bowdoin has found a rebirth of the New England Puritan spirit, conjoined to that other New England tradition, the sectarian utopian community.

Bowdoin, to be sure, does not express the connections among these key concepts in any way similar to what we have just suggested. But our interpretation closely follows what members of the Bowdoin community do say. Bowdoin vacillates between exhorting the importance of diversity and difference and exhorting the importance of sustainability. It does so with no sense of how disparate and unbridgeable these ideals really are. One is a doctrine of disjunction; the other of imposed unity. They cannot reside easily together except by ignoring the contradiction.

“A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College” emphasizes that the common good is a “challenge” to define in light of diversity and difference. But the 2002 “Environmental Mission Statement” sees no challenge. The common good sits plainly in view: “The environment within and beyond Bowdoin College is one of the fundamental aspects of our community and one that we, as members of the College, have in common.”⁴⁷⁸

“A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College” warns students that social unity is rare and difficult. Students must “contend with diversity and the conflicts inherent in differing experiences, perspectives and values.” But the “Environmental Mission Statement” finds easy answers to these conflicts. It speaks of a program that “encompasses” perspectives and divisions rather than one in which students “contend” with these matters. And it treats the tensions in “pluralist democracy” as amenable to “effective, far-sighted environmental governance” that draws on “professional expertise,” collaboration, thoughtfulness, and responsibility.⁴⁷⁹

Former dean for academic affairs Craig McEwen declared that diversity is so fraught with internal contradictions that the only plausible way to talk about the subject was through “storytelling.” Sustainability, as Majora Carter reminds us, involves storytelling, too, but it also

⁴⁷⁸“A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College,” *Bowdoin College Catalogue* 2011-2012, 15, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/courses/catalog/pdf-09-10/09-liberal-education.pdf>. “Environmental Mission Statement,” *Bowdoin College Catalogue* 2002–2003, 346-347.

⁴⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 15 and 346-347.

lays claim to a body of positive fact. The 2009 “Environmental Mission Statement” explains that advancement in sustainability requires further “study and deliberation” even as one rests in “accumulated knowledge.”

“A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College” warns that diversity brings “complexity.” The American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment assures us that “scientific consensus” has been achieved and the results are unambiguous.⁴⁸⁰

Diversity and sustainability tug in different if not always opposite directions. The grand vision that animates “diversity” is that human cultural differences are profound. Differences are ineluctable and groups are incommensurate to the degree that the only possible approach to addressing cultural divisions is to offer them uncritical respect. Sustainability will have none of that. Its vision is that we are one global community, profoundly interconnected and mutually responsible for one another’s welfare. Each individual bears the weight of acting not according to cultural preference but according to an obligation shared with every other individual to protect the Earth.

These are divergent and uncompromising visions of reality. Not that this has prevented attempts to fuse diversity and sustainability as part of a larger doctrine. Such attempts generally build on the idea that a sustainable society provides “environmental justice” to minority groups. Respect for diversity thus is said to fall within the compass of sustainability. This fusion is part of a larger social justice agenda and a prominent feature of UNESCO’s “Decade of Sustainable Development,” (2005–2014), but it does not dominate Bowdoin’s pronouncements on the topic.⁴⁸¹

Attempts to fuse diversity and sustainability are also made via ecological analogy. Sustainable biological communities such as coral reefs, rain forests, or Yellowstone Park have built-in diversity of plants and animals, without which the ecosystem is thrown out of balance and destructive consequences follow. This has been the principal argument, for example, for reintroducing wolves into Yellowstone, where their predation on elk has had numerous positive consequences for plants, land animals, and fish.⁴⁸² By analogy, therefore, it is argued that sustainable human communities ought also to have built-in diversity.

This analogy is fragile in that it makes human cultural differences stand in for species, and it would seem open to extrapolation that some species are naturally the prey of other species that are naturally predators. Nonetheless, the comparison is offered as a reason why those primarily concerned with advancing the cause of sustainability ought to embrace key parts of the

⁴⁸⁰Ibid. Text of the American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment,” American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment, <http://www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org/about/commitment>.

⁴⁸¹United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development: 2005–2014* (Paris: Division for the Promotion of Quality Education, 2005), <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001416/141629e.pdf>.

⁴⁸²Jennifer S. Holland, “The Wolf Effect,” *National Geographic*, Geographica, October 2004, http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0410/resources_geo.html.

diversity movement. Again, UNESCO is among the major proponents of this approach. Its 2003 report, *Cultural Diversity and Biodiversity for Sustainable Development*, explicitly laid out the case that “reduced diversity in its cultural and environmental dimensions poses a threat to global stability and . . . makes the world and its inhabitants increasingly vulnerable.”⁴⁸³ This theme appears as a minor thread at Bowdoin.

VIII. Gender

Like diversity and sustainability, “gender” is an omnipresent term in contemporary American higher education. It is typically used as a replacement for the term “sex” as a way of naming the difference between men and women. “Gender” replaced “sex” in response to feminist insistence that sexual differences are socially constructed, not biologically determined. The word “gender” has now achieved an anodyne acceptance among many who never encountered the feminist argument and who do not hear its polemical subtext. The Bowdoin women’s studies department, however, is keenly alert to the argument behind the word. In the 2012–2013 *Bowdoin Catalogue*, the department explains:

Courses in Gender and Women’s Studies investigate the experience of women and men in light of the social construction of gender and its meaning across cultures and historic periods. Gender construction is explored as an institutionalized means of structuring inequality and dominance.⁴⁸⁴

This is a flat declaration not only that “gender” is in every significant respect a social construct, but that the study of gender must be pursued as a way of understanding unjust hierarchy: “inequality and dominance.”

When Bowdoin talks about “gender,” these assumptions are never far from the surface. Gender connects to injustice via the sense of oppression, inequality, and dominance.

Erasing Men

In subsequent sections we present in more detail the ways in which gender and related ideas and behaviors permeate student life and faculty and administrative affairs. It seems useful to begin, however, with an account of how the concept of gender has been used at Bowdoin to displace and remove the college’s former references to men.

In 1911, while dean of the college, Kenneth Sills published *The First American, and Other Poems*. Nestled between his translation of Dante’s Sonnet XXXII, “The Boat of Love,” and seven translations of “Medieval Lyrics,” Sills included an original poem, written in 1901 while a Bowdoin senior:

⁴⁸³UNESCO and UNEP, *Cultural Diversity and Biodiversity for Sustainable Development: A Jointly Convened UNESCO and UNEP High-Level Roundtable Held on 3 September 2002 in Johannesburg During the World Summit on Sustainable Development* (Nairobi, Kenya: UNEP, 2003), <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001322/132262e.pdf>.

⁴⁸⁴*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 173.

SONS OF BOWDOIN

A COLLEGE SONG

RISE! Sons of Bowdoin! praise her fame!
 And sing aloud her glorious name,
 To Bowdoin, Bowdoin, lift your song.
 And may the music echo long
 O'er whispering pines and campus fair.
 With sturdy might filling the air:
 Bowdoin! from birth the nurturer of men!
 To thee we pledge our love again, again!

While now amid thy halls we stay
 And breathe thy spirit day by day,
 O may we thus full worthy be
 To march in that proud company
 Of poets, statesmen, and each son
 Who brings thee fame by deeds well done:
 Bowdoin! from birth the nurturer of men!
 To thee we pledge our love again, again!

And when in future wanderings, we
 Shall fainting yearn for glimpse of thee,
 O then before our presence rise,
 And may the light of thy dear eyes
 Give sweetness to our fainting heart,
 To us new life and strength impart:
 Bowdoin! from birth the nurturer of men!
 To thee we pledge our love again, again!⁴⁸⁵

The First American reflects a wide array of Sills's long-held interests and convictions: his love of country, of Medieval and Renaissance poetry, of pagan antiquity, of the college's legendary Thorndike Oak, and of Bowdoin herself. Sills's poetic adulation of Bowdoin was eventually renamed "Rise, Sons of Bowdoin," and was shortened to include only the first two stanzas. It became a favored song at the college, was featured in an article in the November 1927 *Bowdoin Alumnus*, and even received mention in Hatch's *The History of Bowdoin College*.⁴⁸⁶ It became the college's alma mater in 1952, the final year of Sills's presidency.

In 1993, Anthony F. Antolini (Class of 1963), the director of Bowdoin Chorus and at that time a Bowdoin adjunct, wrote a version of the alma mater expressly to remove any mention of

⁴⁸⁵Kenneth C. M. Sills, *The First American, and Other Poems* (Brunswick, ME: The Record Press, 1911), 10.

⁴⁸⁶Louis C. Hatch, *The History of Bowdoin College* (Portland, ME: Loring, Short & Harmon, 1927), 292.

“sons” from “Rise, Sons of Bowdoin.”⁴⁸⁷ Sills’s original opening line, “Rise, sons of Bowdoin,” was in Antolini’s version changed to “Raise songs to Bowdoin.” Antolini altered repeated lines 7 and 15 from “Bowdoin! From birth the nurturer of men!” to “Bowdoin, from birth, our nurturer and friend.” And he transformed line 13, “Of poets, statesmen, and each son,” into “Of poets, leaders and each one.”⁴⁸⁸ On February 12, 1994, the Bowdoin Alumni Council voted unanimously to adopt Antolini’s version as the college alma mater.⁴⁸⁹

The students in Jennifer Scanlon’s Fall 2011 Gender and Women’s Studies course 280, “Forty Years: The History of Women at Bowdoin,” composed an oral history project that sought to reconstruct the experience of women at Bowdoin since coeducation in 1971.⁴⁹⁰ Prof. Scanlon described Antolini’s adaptation as “gender neutral” (although it still refers to Bowdoin as “her”), and placed it squarely in the history of women at the college. But the history of “Raise Songs to Bowdoin” is not just part of the story of Bowdoin including women. It is also part of the story of Bowdoin deprecating its own past.

Antolini’s revision of Bowdoin’s alma mater is one small illustration of this effort. In the 1990s, Bowdoin underwent a process of writing masculinity out of its lore and public celebrations, and sought to overturn or reconfigure those institutions most greatly associated with men. The *Bowdoin College Catalogue*, for instance, still referred to a “first-year student” as a “freshman” and to all of its first-year students as “freshmen” until 1989–1990.⁴⁹¹ The 1990–1991 *Catalogue* introduced the term “first-year students.”⁴⁹² That year, the use of “freshmen” was deleted, but “freshman” remained. By 1992–1993, “freshman” was almost completely removed from the *Catalogue* and replaced by “first-year,” but it did appear in the index in this form: “Freshman seminars. *See* First-year seminars.”⁴⁹³ “Upperclassmen” was likewise removed from the 1991–1992 *Catalogue* and was eventually replaced by “upperclass students” in 1994–1995.

Bowdoin also rewrote President Hyde’s 1906 “The Offer of the College.” Originally included as the first chapter of Hyde’s *The College Man and the College Woman*, “The Offer of the College” is a brief, poetic description of what college life should be in its ideal:

To be at home in all lands and all ages; to count Nature a familiar acquaintance, and Art an intimate friend; to gain a standard for the appreciation of other men’s work and the criticism of your own; to carry the keys of the world’s library in your pocket, and feel its

⁴⁸⁷ Anthony Antolini, email message to Michael Toscano, October 15, 2012.

⁴⁸⁸ “Bowdoin College: Baccalaureate Exercises,” Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME, May 26, 2006, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/commencement/archives/pdf/Baccalaureate06.pdf>.

⁴⁸⁹ “Timeline,” Forty Years: The History of Women at Bowdoin, a Class Project of GWS 280–Fall 2011, <http://research.bowdoin.edu/forty-years-the-history-of-women-at-bowdoin/timeline/>.

⁴⁹⁰ Antolini to Toscano.

⁴⁹¹ *Bowdoin College Catalogue 1989–1990*, 6.

⁴⁹² *Bowdoin College Catalogue 1990–1991*, 38.

⁴⁹³ *Bowdoin College Catalogue 1992–1993*, 276. This statement, located in the index, was removed in 2003–2004.

resources behind you in whatever task you undertake; to make hosts of friends among the men of your own age who are to be leaders in all walks of life; to lose yourself in generous enthusiasms and cooperate with others for common ends; to learn manners from students who are gentlemen, and form character under professors who are Christians,— this is the offer of the college for the best four years of your life.⁴⁹⁴

First included in Bowdoin's *Bulletin* in 1943–1944, Hyde's offer was removed in the late 1960s because of its Christian content.

“The Offer of the College” resurfaced in Bowdoin's institutional vocabulary in the 1990s, but in an attenuated form. It reappeared first as a token phrase in admissions materials. As President Mills acknowledged in a May 12, 2010, letter to “Members of the Bowdoin Community,” it was the former dean of admissions Richard E. Steele (1991–2001, 2006) who had “rediscovered the powerful words of William DeWitt Hyde and made ‘The Offer of the College’ a renewed hallmark of Bowdoin's student recruitment efforts.”⁴⁹⁵

An excerpt of “The Offer” appeared in President Edwards's “The Mission of the College” in 1999, and today President Mills quotes it nearly as frequently as he does McKeen's statement about the common good. On August 25, 2001, Mills gave his first “Student Welcome” speech in which he introduced Bowdoin's incoming students to what he called “our other institutional canon.” The transcript of the speech printed Hyde's offer as if it were a free verse poem:

To be at Home in all lands and all ages;
 To count Nature a familiar acquaintance;
 And Art an intimate friend;
 To carry the keys of the world's library in your pocket
 And feel its resources behind you in whatever task you undertake;
 To make hosts of friends who are to be leaders in all walks of life;
 To lose oneself in generous enthusiasms
 And co-operate with others for common ends—
 This is the offer of the college
 For the best four years of your life.⁴⁹⁶

The third clause of Hyde's offer—“to gain a standard for the appreciation of other men's work and the criticism of your own,” had been excised. In addition, Hyde's phrasing, “To make hosts of friends among the men of your own age,” was trimmed to merely “To make hosts of friends,”

⁴⁹⁴William DeWitt Hyde, *The College Man and the College Woman* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1906), 3, http://books.google.com/books?id=zboMAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

⁴⁹⁵Barry Mills, “Richard Steele,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, Letters, May 12, 2010, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/letters/2010/richard-steele.shtml>.

⁴⁹⁶Barry Mills, “Student Welcome,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, Speeches, August 25, 2001, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2001/student-welcome-01.shtml>.

and “to learn manners from students who are gentlemen, and form character under professors who are Christians” was eliminated.

This reimagined version of “The Offer” features prominently in the 2006 statement on the nature of contemporary liberal arts education, “A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College.” The 2006 version reinserts Hyde’s phrase about gaining a “standard of appreciation of work,”⁴⁹⁷ but that standard is of “others’ work,” rather than “other men’s work,” as Hyde wrote it. “A Liberal Education” says this about Hyde’s original “Offer”:

This offer spelled out a vision of the aspirations of a liberal education appropriate to the early twentieth century. Many elements of it still have currency one hundred years later. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a vastly changed College in a dramatically altered world provides a related but expanded offer.⁴⁹⁸

It is easy to guess which parts “still have currency.” It is also worth noting that Bowdoin calls this an “expanded offer,” even though nothing was added.

While it is understandable that Bowdoin would want to project its current understanding of its purposes, the willingness to amend historical documents to imprint them with updated language and ideas cuts against the values that Bowdoin is ostensibly extolling. “To be at Home in all lands and all ages” is to respect the testimony of the past, even if one disagrees with it. Bowdoin students ought to be able to comprehend that statements written in 1776 (“All men are created equal”) or 1863 (“our fathers brought forth on this continent”) or 1901 (“the nurturer of men”) or 1906 (“students who are gentlemen”) are written in an idiom that differs from our own, but for all that they are clear and powerful statements that invite the contemporary reader to exercise intellectual temperance and open-mindedness. The past is a closed book to those who can only hear its voice in modern translation.

In 1997 Bowdoin renamed the occasion set aside to honor the academic achievement of students, which had been named after the college’s original benefactor. “James Bowdoin Day” became “Sarah and James Bowdoin Day.” James’s wife Sarah Dearborn Bowdoin is an otherwise undistinguished historical figure. To give her some heft, Bowdoin notes that she kept a journal, entertained guests, collected art, and kept legal title to her own property.⁴⁹⁹

Speaking on October 27, 2011, at Sarah and James Bowdoin Day, Mills explained that the event had been originally established in 1941.⁵⁰⁰ He continued:

⁴⁹⁷“A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College,” *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2006-2007*, 23–24, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/courses/catalog/pdf-09-10/09-liberal-education.pdf>.

⁴⁹⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹Barry Mills, “Sarah and James Bowdoin Day Remarks,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, Speeches, October 30, 2009, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2010/sj-bowdoin-day-10.shtml>.

⁵⁰⁰Barry Mills, “Sarah and James Bowdoin Day Remarks,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, Speeches, October 27, 2011, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2011/sarah-james-bowdoin-day-2011.shtml>.

In 1997, the College, by faculty vote, determined that it was appropriate to reestablish this tradition in the name of James Bowdoin and Sarah, his wife, certainly partially in recognition of the fact that the College is a place where men and women from across the United States and the world come as students and faculty to study, teach, and learn.⁵⁰¹

These changes in language and nomenclature did not stand alone, but were part of a larger effort to refashion the temper of the college. The larger project is visible, for example, in faculty complaints. On February 2, 1998, Professor Rachel Ex Connelly spoke to the faculty on behalf of the Oversight Committee on the Status of Women. The minutes record her informing fellow Bowdoin faculty that an unconscious and subtle bias toward women existed at the college. She suggested that it may not be readily apparent, but that there is “a larger pattern in which students feel silenced.” She continued: “[M]uch discrimination in the classroom is subtle and unconscious, and that it is not ‘out there’ but ‘in here.’”⁵⁰²

Prof. Connelly’s comments sparked discussion, including from former dean for academic affairs Craig McEwen, who suggested that solving this problem “will involve a long-term effort by faculty to self-educate.” Prof. Irena Makarushka reminded the faculty that “these are not just classroom issues, but broader cultural issues.” Prof. Jane Knox-Voina responded that “changes must begin in the classroom.”⁵⁰³

The Bowdoin faculty did indeed attempt to annul the power of its supposed subconscious gender bias. On March 21, 1998, the faculty minutes record that

Prof. Connelly and McEwen had the members of the meeting organize themselves into small groups to discuss hand-outs relevant to race and gender issues in the classroom. After twenty minutes, representatives of each group reported on the various challenges and approaches that had been discussed.⁵⁰⁴

This appears to have been a one-off attempt; the faculty minutes record no repeat of this exercise. Efforts to disassemble the “pattern” of silence in the culture, as Prof. Connelly put it, however, continued in other contexts. Eight years later, the 2006 *Bowdoin College Self-Study* reviewed some significant parts of that history. Looking back to Bowdoin’s previous accreditation report in 1996, the self-study noted a general improvement in “campus climate.” The report attributed this change to the closing of fraternities at Bowdoin, a process completed in 1999—one year after Connelly’s exhortation:

The elimination of fraternities between 1997 and 1999 played a significant role in changing institutional symbols and informal patterns of conduct that had reinforced the

⁵⁰¹Ibid.

⁵⁰²Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, February 2, 1998, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁵⁰³Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, March 21, 1998, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

perception of Bowdoin as a men's college with women students in the first 25 years of coeducation. The turn from a social life dominated by fraternities, in combination with the greatly increased diversity of the student body, has also helped to establish a stronger sense of connection and community that crosses lines of gender, race, and class.⁵⁰⁵

The self-study authors described the fraternities as expressions of “institutional symbols” and “informal patterns of conduct” that reinforced male privilege. They suggested that these “symbols” and “patterns” not only reinforced sexism, but also racism and classism fostered by an institution that privileged the white, upper-middle-to-upper-class male. Having swept away the fraternities, Bowdoin assessed, the college had become more fully coeducational.

Fraternities, however, were not bastions of male privilege in the sense of excluding women. According to “Building Community at Bowdoin College,” the February 1997 Commission on Residential Life report that suggested the elimination of the fraternities to the board of trustees, “23% of women on campus belong to fraternities,” a number they compared unfavorably to male participation, which was 36 percent.⁵⁰⁶ Nonetheless, the commission emphasized that the fraternities were divisive in the eyes of “many students of color, gay and lesbian students, and some women students” who were angered by “the sense of exclusion, separation, and even intimidation” they experienced from the fraternities.⁵⁰⁷

The commission polled the student body to gauge its perspective on whether the fraternities should be maintained, altered, or abolished, and found that

49% of students preferred that “Bowdoin fraternities should continue to exist as they currently are,” while 33% indicated that they “should continue to exist but with substantial changes.” Eighteen percent selected the final option—abolition of fraternities.⁵⁰⁸

The commission then offered two possible readings of this data:

One reading of this result is that 82% of students support fraternities. Another reading suggests that 51% of students believe there needs to be substantial change in the fraternity system.⁵⁰⁹

The commission chose the second reading, and recommended the fraternities be closed. The timeline on the *Forty Years: The History of Women at Bowdoin* website included this entry for 1997: “Fraternities phased out, in part because of their incompatibility with coeducation.”⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁵*The Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2006), 119, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/pdf/standard-eleven.pdf>.

⁵⁰⁶“Building Community at Bowdoin College: An Interim Report of the Commission on Residential Life to the Board of Trustees of Bowdoin College,” Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME, February 22, 1997, 10.

⁵⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁰⁹*Ibid.*

One of the most significant icons of male privilege remaining was the college's athletic program. The 2006 self-study described efforts to alter the college's sports culture:

The 1996 Reaccreditation Self-Study commented on concerns during the 1990s about gender equity in the athletic program at Bowdoin. Since that time, the College has made significant strides in creating greater gender balance among head coaches, moving toward parity in athletic participation rates of women and men, and in establishing women's athletics on an equal footing with men's. In 1996, the head coaches of women's basketball, men's and women's tennis, and sailing were men; in 2005–06, they were women. In addition, the College added a full-time women's lacrosse coach and part-time head coaches in volleyball and women's rugby. Each is a woman.⁵¹¹

The report celebrated the triumph of gender equity in sports, but more challenges remained. For example, in April 2005, Kristen Ghodsee, professor of gender and women's studies, recommended to the faculty that it change the wording of a question on the student course evaluations, because "women faculty were scoring consistently lower on #2 than on #5." Ghodsee explained that "We thought this might be because 'conduct' referred to a more authoritarian lecture style. So, given student gender biases, we suggested a broader, more inclusive language."⁵¹² For Ghodsee, "gender biases" among students is a given, a foundational principle, one that, we should add, went unchallenged by her fellow faculty.⁵¹³

Bowdoin continues its search to identify and eradicate symbols and patterns of male dominance. In "finding a voice," the Bowdoin women—faculty and students—who have taken up this cause have sought to clear away all aspects of Bowdoin's past that run counter to their ideology. The college has acceded to this campaign in every stage and in some instances even anticipated its demands.

⁵¹⁰“Timeline.”

⁵¹¹*Bowdoin Self-Study 2006*, 73, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/pdf/standard-six.pdf>.

⁵¹²Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, April 4, 2005, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁵¹³At the very least, the faculty minutes do not record such a challenge.

Chapter 5

Student Culture

Our examination of “key concepts” at Bowdoin has already drawn out many important aspects of student culture at the college. The Bowdoin Bubble, storytelling, difference, diversity, sustainability, and gender are prominent themes in the way students organize their lives at Bowdoin. A student’s experience of the college community is to a large degree shaped by and filtered through these concepts. But many other factors also influence that experience. In this section, we examine a wide range of those factors, beginning with (1) the roles of sex and sexuality in Bowdoin student culture. Sex and drinking loom very large in student culture at Bowdoin—and elsewhere—and we pay proportionate attention to them.

We began this study fully expecting that students at Bowdoin would have their own culture, influenced by administrative concerns but substantially independent of the dictates of the college. We have been unable to substantiate that hypothesis. Rather, and very much to our surprise, student culture at Bowdoin seems to be molded to the administration’s priorities. Bowdoin’s administration does not control every aspect of student life. Students sometimes engage in activities the administration frowns upon—such as occasional binge drinking or creating social divisions between drinkers and non-drinkers—but in every area of student culture examined we found that Bowdoin’s administration exercised a strong and typically dominating influence. Students vary in the degree to which they are aware of how closely they are shepherded.

A large majority of Bowdoin students are sexually active, and some are very active. Sexuality, however, is about more than what students do. It also involves how they see themselves and each other and what kinds of relationships they deem desirable or possible. We begin with an extended examination of student sexuality because, next to academics, it appears to be the most important part of student life at Bowdoin.

We also examine in briefer compass: (2) student housing and dining, (3) Bowdoin’s traditions of partying and drinking, (4) athletics and sports, (5) organized student groups, (6) hazing, (7) student involvement in politics, (8) student involvement in religious activities, (9) identity and race in student life, and (10) global citizenship.

Bowdoin student culture outwardly emphasizes individualism. This is apparent in Bowdoin’s approach to academic programs that leaves students, apart from a thin veneer of faculty advising, to decide for themselves what courses to take and in what order. But the emphasis on students as fully ready to make their own choices without much in the way of controlling structures or rules has a complicated relation to the nonacademic side of campus life. In some respects, campus culture upholds the idea of the student as an autonomous maker of his own decisions.

But just as robustly or more so, Bowdoin student culture imposes a regime of social control that strictly limits choices. In the name of “inclusivity,” the community prohibits numerous kinds of free association among students. Sometimes this social control takes the form of direct regulation, as when the college abolished fraternities despite their popularity with many students, or when the Student Activities Office requires that all student groups pass various tests for ethnic, gender, and sexual-preference diversity of membership. Social control also takes the form of acquiescence to informal norms. The prevalence of “hooking up,” for example, is fostered mainly by the sense among students that they have no real alternatives.

I. Sex and Sexuality in Campus Culture

In 2009, Bowdoin added *Speak About It* to New Student Orientation, a play written by students about the sexual exploits of undergraduates at Bowdoin. The 2010 orientation schedule for the class of 2014 offered a précis of its content:

What’s the deal with sex and relationships at Bowdoin? Bowdoin students of past and present have put their heads together to offer you this poignant insight into relationships and sex at Bowdoin: the good, the not-so-good, and everything-in-between.⁵¹⁴

And if students had follow-up questions:

Trained members of both student and staff resource teams will be available throughout the presentation. Small group debrief/ info sessions with your proctor groups and members of Safe Space and BMASV [Bowdoin Men Against Sexual Violence] will follow the show.⁵¹⁵

Speak About It was a mandatory event for new students.

Speak About It was deemed such a successful and insightful discussion of undergraduate sex that its cast members took the show on the road, bringing Bowdoin’s brand of sexual discourse to other colleges. *Speak About It* is “storytelling.” According to its website, all the *Speak About It* stories are true, either biographical or autobiographical.⁵¹⁶ Kate Maxwell (Bates College, Class of 2012) praised *Speak About It* for its perspective and insight: “The program was clearly designed for college students by college students who had been there.”⁵¹⁷

One scene features an undergraduate male and an undergraduate female voicing their thoughts aloud while preparing to have sex:

Male: We’ve been making out for a while now.

⁵¹⁴“DRAFT: Orientation 2010: Class of 2014,” Bowdoin College, Orientation and First-Year Programming, 6, <https://www.bowdoin.edu/orientation/pdf/orientation-schedule-2010.pdf>.

⁵¹⁵Ibid.

⁵¹⁶“About,” *Speak About It*, http://speakaboutonline.com/?page_id=300.

⁵¹⁷This content is transcribed from the *Speak About It* video on *Speak About It*, <http://speakaboutonline.com/>. All citations of this work are taken from this source.

Female: I wish he would just ask me to take off my shirt.

Male: Really? That won't kill the mood?

Female: What mood? We're in a bunk bed. Just ask.

Eventually, the male sneaks away as the female orgasms loudly alone.

Another scene features a gay couple. The two stand arm in arm:

Male #1: The next morning, we had sex. Sober sex. Three times. I didn't give a shit that I was hung over.

A third scene features a monologue by "your average red-blooded American male":

I enjoy baseball, football. A lady with a nice set of shells, and legs that go all the way up to her ass. [He paused with his hand cupped in the air as if he were grabbing a woman's buttocks.]

This crudity about sex and sexuality is considered sexual maturity at Bowdoin.

But *Speak About It* is not only about the sexual activities, and likes and dislikes, of undergraduates. It is also a morality tale:

Female Cast Member: I'm sure you've heard it before, but it's crucial to any healthy sexual encounter or relationship:

Cast: Consent!

Another cast member urged the audience to take action:

If you feel empowered to take a stand against sexual assault, or you have your own story to tell, don't let it end here.

"Consent" is the central ethical vision of sex and sexuality at Bowdoin. The reason the Office of Student Affairs has made *Speak About It* mandatory for undergraduates is that the play promotes the ethic of "consent," which is seen as the community's best tool for staving off the threat of sexual assault.

Timothy Foster, dean of student affairs, effusively celebrated *Speak About It* for its ability to communicate to students the grave seriousness of sexual assault:

We have tried many different approaches to talking about sexual assault awareness and prevention on our campus and each program left me feeling like we hadn't quite hit the mark. Most notably, we had missed the opportunity to talk about how relationships can be healthy and good.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁸Ibid.

Speak About It offers a glimpse into sex, gender, and sexuality at Bowdoin. Sex, as Bowdoin understands it, is something that undergraduates engage in as they please, provided that they follow certain decorum. Asking for and obtaining “consent” is the main thing. What worries Bowdoin authorities most is that overly-aggressive undergraduate men may not always obtain full “consent” before engaging in sexual activity. The job of the Bowdoin authorities is to channel male sexual aggression into the constraints of “consent”—a job made more difficult by the campus culture of heavy drinking.

Consent

The *Student Handbook* provides a definition of “sexual intercourse”: “penetration (anal, oral or vaginal) by a penis, tongue, finger or an inanimate object.”⁵¹⁹ This is a somewhat odd definition—one at odds with common usage, if not always with dictionary definitions.⁵²⁰ It treats oral and anal sex as the equivalent of coitus, and equates “inanimate objects” with human genitalia. And, if taken literally, it defines French kissing as sexual intercourse.

The definition’s breadth and ambiguity is not an accident or oversight. Rather, Bowdoin is taking care to say that it regards all (or nearly all) forms of human sexual conduct as legitimate. Bowdoin students are free to express their sexuality as they see fit—insofar as the participants have gained “consent.”

This puts a great deal of weight on the word and Bowdoin, accordingly, has a far more meticulous definition of “consent” than it does of “sexual intercourse”:

“Effective consent” means words or actions that show a knowing and voluntary agreement to engage in mutually agreed-upon sexual activity. Effective Consent cannot be gained by Force [*sic*], by ignoring or acting in spite of the objections of another, or by taking advantage of the Incapacitation [*sic*] of another, where the Respondent knows or reasonably should have known of such Incapacitation. The use of alcohol or other drugs will never function to excuse behavior that violates this Policy. Effective Consent is also absent when the activity in question exceeds the scope of Effective Consent previously given. In addition, certain states have designated a minimum age under which a person cannot give Effective Consent.⁵²¹

This legalistic approach is elaborated in a variety of Bowdoin documents, including “A Guide to Bowdoin’s Sexual Misconduct Policy,” which describes the “Anonymous Report Form.” It addresses “The No-Contact Order,” various levels of “Resolution,” and “Filing a Criminal Complaint,” before offering a series of detailed “case studies” of how students are expected to draw the line between permissible and impermissible acts. Judging from some of the examples,

⁵¹⁹*Student Handbook 2011–2012*, 50, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook/print-section.shtml>.

⁵²⁰President Clinton famously drew a relevant distinction, but *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*, s.v., “sexual intercourse,” allows the word to stand for “physical sexual contact between individuals that involves the genitalia of at least one person,” 1177.

⁵²¹*Student Handbook 2011–2012*, 49.

this line isn't especially intuitive. A man taking advantage of a woman who has drunk too much at a party is excused because the woman's drunkenness wasn't obvious. But a man who makes a pass at another man and is successfully rebuffed is guilty because he didn't ask in the first place:

1: Jada is at a party and, although she has been drinking a lot, none of her friends feels concerned about her level of intoxication. Paul gets to the party late and sees Jada. They dance and talk and eventually start making out on the dance floor. Her friends all see this but no one stops her because she seems capable of making her own decisions. Paul asks Jada to go back to his room and they leave the party. Back in his room, Paul, who is not very intoxicated, and Jada start making out. Things progress and Paul asks Jada if he should get a condom. She agrees and they have sex. The next morning Jada wakes up and is horrified to be in Paul's room and even more horrified to learn they had sex. She remembers dancing with Paul at the party and flirting with him, but doesn't remember leaving the party with him.

This does not constitute a violation of Bowdoin's Student Sexual Misconduct Policy. Paul had no way of knowing how intoxicated Jada was, as he had not seen her drink nor had her behavior shown her level of intoxication. He neither caused her incapacitation, nor took advantage of her incapacitation. He asked for consent and she gave it, thereby meeting his responsibility to obtain her effective consent under the policy.

5: Patrick and Ed are hanging out at Supersnacks one night and start talking. They decide to go home together to watch a movie and head back to Ed's house. Patrick is surprised when they go to Ed's room to watch the movie, rather than [*sic*] watching it in the Common Room. He likes him though and hopes things go well and so they go into his room. Ed keeps trying to kiss him and he keeps moving away from him. He never asks him if he's interested but just keeps trying to touch him and kiss him. Patrick feels very uncomfortable, but isn't really sure what to do so he just keeps moving away. Ed stops for a while, but does eventually start up again. This time, while he is trying to kiss Patrick, he grabs Patrick's butt as he tries to pull him close to him. Patrick pushes him away and leaves his room.

This does constitute a violation of Bowdoin's Student Sexual Misconduct Policy, as it would be considered "non-consensual sexual contact" as Ed touched Patrick's intimate parts, in this case his buttocks, without his consent.⁵²² (emphases in original)

While Bowdoin encourages sexual license, it tirelessly warns students that whatever they do, they must do it with the expressed consent of a partner who is fully able to exercise informed judgment. The 2011 performance of *Speak About It* concluded:

⁵²²A Guide to Bowdoin's Student Sexual Misconduct Policy," Bowdoin College, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/pdf/guide-to-sexual-misconduct.pdf>.

Whatever you decide you want your relationship with sex to be about there are opportunities out there. Whether you want to have sex or you don't, you're looking for love or a one night stand, you're gay or straight or somewhere in between, it's all possible. And whatever happens remember to be safe, get consent, and watch out for your friends.⁵²³

This encapsulates what Bowdoin teaches about sex. While *Speak About It* includes a disclaimer that students should feel free to decline sex, the overarching message of the performance is have sex freely, in the form that you deem desirable, but make sure that your sexual partner or partners agree that this form of sex is agreeable.

Speak About It is not the only voice for “consent” at Bowdoin. In April 2012, for example, Bowdoin held the fourth annual “Consent is Sexy” week.⁵²⁴ “Consent is Sexy” is a series of programs designed to “prevent sexual misconduct at Bowdoin.”⁵²⁵ “Consent is Sexy” was sponsored by the Alliance for Sexual Assault Prevention, an umbrella organization that unites “Peer Health, the Athletic Council, BMASV, Safe Space, V-Space, V-Day, Bowdoin Queer Straight Alliance (BQSA), Class Councils, Bowdoin Student Government (BSG), Peer Health, Women’s Resource Center (WRC), African American Society, Latin American Student Organization (LASO), Spirituality Group and the Inter-House Council.”⁵²⁶

Bowdoin has also convened a Sexual Misconduct Resource Team, which in 2011–2012 had eighteen members. Membership included a large administrative presence: the senior associate dean of student affairs, the associate dean of student affairs and director of residential life, the director of the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity, the director of the Women’s Resource Center, the coordinator of health education, the director of health services, the Counseling Center senior staff clinician, a football and softball coach, and a women’s basketball coach. It also included representatives of a number of significant student groups, including from Safe Space, V-Day, BMASV, V-Space, BQSA, the Alliance for Sexual Assault Prevention, the African American Society, the Inter-House Council, and Bowdoin Student Government.⁵²⁷ The Resource Team “works on issues related to sexual violence on Bowdoin’s campus including policy and procedures, support and resources, education and prevention, assessment and communication.”⁵²⁸

⁵²³“Speak About It 2011,” Bowdoin College, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/sexual-assault/video/speakaboutit.mp4>.

⁵²⁴Sam Miller, “‘Consent Is Sexy’ Week Fights Sexual Misconduct,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 20, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7223>.

⁵²⁵Ibid.

⁵²⁶“Who We Are: Student Groups,” Bowdoin College, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/sexual-assault/about.shtml#2>.

⁵²⁷Ibid.

⁵²⁸Ibid.

Bowdoin has also created a separate juridical body to hear cases pertaining to sexual misconduct, the Student Sexual Assault and Misconduct Board.⁵²⁹ The board is chaired by dean of student affairs Timothy Foster and consists of eleven undergraduates. Meadow Davis, associate director of student affairs, is the advisor to the Student Sexual Misconduct Board. Prior to her current position, Davis served as director of Bowdoin's Women's Resource Center. According to the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs "Who We Are" page on Bowdoin's website, Davis now "devotes much of her energy to sexual violence prevention."⁵³⁰

Assault

Consensuality is of course a moral prerequisite for any appropriate sexual interaction. Rape and molestation are horrific.

In just one case of sexual assault at Bowdoin have any circumstantial details become public. According to the Center for Public Integrity:

In December 2007, Ariel Brown [a pseudonym], then a junior at Bowdoin College, reported being raped by a baseball player in her dorm after an alcohol-soaked party. Two months later, the Bowdoin Sexual Assault and Misconduct Board deemed the student responsible for "the charge of Sexual Assault," case records show. For Brown, it was little consolation: A school investigation had already dismissed her allegations of forced anal sex, making the finding solely for "an act of oral sex."...

During her proceeding, Brown requested that the alleged assailant be suspended. Instead, he received "non-academic suspension"—in effect, social probation. Records show he was "removed from campus for all non-academic pursuits"—no housing, no activities. But Brown later learned Tim Foster, Bowdoin's dean of students, had made an exception: The athlete could attend home baseball games. Brown's mother—a Bowdoin alumnae—remembers complaining to Foster, who relayed that the student had been in his office, crying, because of the penalty. He was allowed to march in the May 2008 graduation; according to records, though, his diploma was held for a year. Foster declined to comment on Brown's case, except to stress that "this matter did not involve any finding of rape." The accused did not respond to several e-mails and phone calls seeking comment.⁵³¹

This passage was also quoted in the *Bowdoin Orient's* daily news feed, *Orient Express*.⁵³²

⁵²⁹*Student Handbook 2011–2012*, 5.

⁵³⁰"Who We Are," Bowdoin College, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/sexual-assault/about.shtml>.

⁵³¹Kristen Lombardi, "A Lack of Consequences for Sexual Assault," The Center for Public Integrity, February 24, 2010, <http://www.publicintegrity.org/2010/02/24/4360/lack-consequences-sexual-assault>.

⁵³²"Campus Violence Elimination Act Follows 2010 Investigation of Response to Alleged Rape at Bowdoin and Other Schools," *Orient Express*, March 11, 2013, <http://bowdoinorientexpress.com/post/45133157635/campus-sexual-violence-elimination-act-follows-2010>.

Cases like this pose challenges for colleges and universities and indeed for the American judicial system as a whole. On April 4, 2011, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) issued new "Sexual Harassment" guidelines ("harassment" in this case defined as including sexual violence) under the authority of Title IX of the Higher Education Act.⁵³³ Most notably, OCR lowered the standard of evidence needed for a college to find an accused student guilty. Whereas before, the evidence needed to be "clear and convincing" for a conviction, the standard was lowered to "more likely than not."

Bowdoin's assault prevention policies must be seen against this larger national backdrop. As the example of "Ariel Brown" illustrates, Bowdoin is struggling with the same underlying problem of determining what standards of proof are appropriate in such cases.

Bowdoin contends with sexual assault on two levels. It adjudicates over alleged and actual sexual assault cases, while also undertaking preventative and educational measures to deflect the possibility of sexual assault. As discussed, Bowdoin allocates significant staff and student time to the enforcement of rules on sexual misconduct. This suggests that sexual misconduct must be a significant problem at Bowdoin in terms of the frequency of infractions, but this does not appear to be the case.

On November 6, 2006, associate dean of student affairs Mary Pat McMahan reported to the faculty on the progress of a new draft of the "Student Sexual Misconduct Policy." The faculty minutes record her presenting two criticisms of the previous policy:

The current policy is unclear in some respects; and in any case has not been used much; the formal process has only been utilized once in ten years.⁵³⁴

McMahan assumed that the low incidence of complaints represented a policy that turned away legitimate grievances without giving them a fair hearing.

On November 8, 2006, McMahan attended a meeting of the Bowdoin Student Government (BSG) in order to explain the intricacies of Bowdoin's "new Sexual Misconduct Policy."⁵³⁵ McMahan offered the same assessment to the BSG she gave to the faculty:

The dean's office does not get near the amount of reports that would be expected considering the statistics regarding sexual assault on campuses and within the age bracket. The fact that the process is not used much is an indicator that it is broken. The old policy...led to general confusion.⁵³⁶

⁵³³Russlynn Ali, Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights, United State Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, "Dear Colleague Letter: Sexual Violence," April 4, 2011, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/dear_colleague_sexual_violence.pdf.

⁵³⁴Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, November 6, 2006, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁵³⁵Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, Bowdoin College, November 8, 2006.

⁵³⁶Ibid.

McMahon hoped that the new policy would lead to an increase in reports of sexual assault. She alluded to nationwide statistics that purport to show that sexual assault on campus is very common, and she had no reason to think that Bowdoin was an exception to this larger picture. In her view, sexual assault was common at Bowdoin, too—and commonly unreported.

In a January 26, 2007, *Bowdoin Orient* article, Dean Foster expressed similar convictions: “In my 10.5 years at Bowdoin, the Sexual Misconduct Board has handled only two cases.” But, unlike McMahon, Foster cited a “handful” of anonymous reports and “alleged victims” as the source of his skepticism: “Each year, however, we receive a handful of reports, some anonymous, of assault, but the alleged victim is unwilling for a variety of reasons to take any formal action.”⁵³⁷

The old policy offered two routes by which a student could complain of sexual assault. McMahon believed that both of these routes discouraged reporting because they caused complainants discomfort. To alleviate this problem, McMahon and a group of “attorneys”⁵³⁸ adapted the University of Virginia’s policy to Bowdoin by adding what McMahon called a “middle road.”⁵³⁹ Foster added:

the new policy and associated process...may encourage complaints to come forward, create a smaller and better prepared board for cases of formal adjudication which should be less intimidating to all, and will be good for all parties involved.⁵⁴⁰

In an October 12, 2007, article in the *Orient*, McMahon explained that the extremely low numbers of reported sexual assaults were just “the tip of the iceberg.”⁵⁴¹

Neither Foster nor McMahon cited actual numbers to back their view that campus sexual assault is a common phenomenon, but a July 2011 post in the *Bowdoin Daily Sun* claimed that “one in five young women will be a victim of sexual assault during college.”⁵⁴² Bowdoin College Health Services quotes other astonishingly high numbers from a “recent study funded by the Department of Justice”:

- About 3% of coeds are raped during each academic year. Over the course of 5 calendar years, including summers and vacations, 20–25% may be raped.

⁵³⁷Kira Chappelle, “New Sex Assault Policy Launched,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 26, 2007, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/2294>.

⁵³⁸Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, Bowdoin College, November 8, 2006.

⁵³⁹Chappelle, “New Sex Assault Policy.”

⁵⁴⁰Ibid.

⁵⁴¹Millan AbiNader, “Understand the Realities of Sexual Assault at Bowdoin,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 12, 2007, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/2886>.

⁵⁴²“Preventing Sexual Assault—There May Be an App for That (Chronicle of Higher Ed),” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, July 14, 2011, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2011/07/preventing-sexual-assault%E2%80%94there-may-be-an-app-for-that-chronicle-of-higher-ed/>.

- Nationally, an additional 15.5% of college females are sexually victimized (e.g., sexual contact is completed with force or threat of non-physical force, threat of rape, or threat of contact).
- Nationally, less than 5% of completed and attempted rapes of college females are reported to the police or campus officials. About 67% of the victims tell a friend.
- Nine out of 10 victims knew their assailant. {Note: Almost all sexual assaults on college campuses are acquaintance rapes and, in most cases, at least one of the persons involved is under the influence of alcohol or another drug.}
- Between 3 and 6% of male university students reported being raped and up to 25% reported being sexually assaulted. Only about 1% of male rape victims reported it to the police.⁵⁴³

These are dramatic claims, but the evidence on which they rest is in considerable dispute. The report cited by Bowdoin's Health Services, *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*, published by the Department of Justice in 2000, rests on a peculiar methodology and even more peculiar definitions.⁵⁴⁴ As critics have pointed out, the researchers who authored the report did not accept the testimony of the women they polled on whether they had been raped. In a 2008 *City Journal* essay, for example, Heather Mac Donald, a fellow at the Manhattan Institute, noted:

Sixty-five percent of what the feminist researchers called “completed rape” victims and three-quarters of “attempted rape” victims said that they did not think that their experiences were “serious enough to report.” The “victims” in the study, moreover, “generally did not state that their victimization resulted in physical or emotional injuries.”⁵⁴⁵

For the researchers, this explains why the number of reported rapes on campus is so different from the number of actual rapes. For Mac Donald, this “discrepancy between the researchers’ conclusions and the subjects’ own views”⁵⁴⁶ exposes the politicization of the researchers and the general lack of seriousness of their findings. According to Mac Donald, the researchers were eager to report high numbers of sexual assaults and they manipulated their data to yield an appearance that supported their premise.

Those numbers, however, have been incorporated into Bowdoin's lexicon of undergraduate sexuality. The cast of *Speak About It* references the same figures. In the early minutes of the performance, one of the male cast members sets the context for the necessity of

⁵⁴³“Sexual Assault,” *Healthy Life: Student Self-Care Guide*, a resource provided by Bowdoin College Health Services, http://www.bowdoin.edu/health/self-care-guide/StudentOnline/SexualAssault_SO.html.

⁵⁴⁴Bonnie S. Fisher, Francis T. Cullen, and Michael G. Turner, *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*, Office of Justice Programs research report (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2000), <http://www.popcenter.org/problems/rape/PDFs/182369.pdf>.

⁵⁴⁵Heather Mac Donald, “The Campus Rape Myth,” *City Journal* (Winter 2008), 24, http://www.city-journal.org/2008/18_1_campus_rape.html.

⁵⁴⁶Ibid.

the play by stating that “Statistically speaking, 1 in 4 college age women experience attempted, or completed, sexual assault.”⁵⁴⁷ This is one of the very first institutionally-sanctioned things—if not the very first thing—that Bowdoin students learn about sex at the college.

Regardless of the accuracy of the national figures, it appears that sexual assault is not occurring in epidemic numbers at Bowdoin. The new policy aimed at eliminating psychological and bureaucratic barriers to reporting instances of sexual assault went into effect spring 2007. The number of reports did indeed increase, but not anywhere close to the supposed national level. An October 2011 *Bowdoin Orient* article reported that there was one offense in 2008.⁵⁴⁸ In 2009, Bowdoin reported a total of five “forcible sex offenses” on campus. In 2010, it reported seven offenses—four of them committed by campus residents. In 2011, there were also seven reported offenses.⁵⁴⁹ These numbers do not specify whether these “sexual offenses” were sexual assault, rape, or sexual misconduct, or if they were reported anonymously or publicly.

The incidence of reported assaults under a reporting system designed to encourage the filing of such reports falls far below the level proclaimed in *Speak About It*. Even if all of these reported incidents were rapes, and all the victims were female, the incidence of rape of women falls well below 1 percent per year. Perhaps these extremely low numbers testify to the effectiveness of a policy that emphasizes “consent” at every opportunity. Or perhaps they testify to the susceptibility of Bowdoin to an ideology that exaggerates the threat of sexual assault by making it seem much more common than it actually is. The low numbers might also explain why Bowdoin is willing to delegate its sexual education to a few undergraduates who tell stories about their own sexual exploits.⁵⁵⁰

The discrepancy between the false claims of a large number of assaults and the facts as annually reported to the Bowdoin community via the federally required Clery Report presents a puzzle. The exaggeration is easy to spot as an exaggeration; moreover it is an extravagant exaggeration. Why then do Bowdoin students and the responsible administrators continue to repeat it and treat it as an established matter? There appears to be a collective will at Bowdoin to believe something about the Bowdoin community that is manifestly false. This is amenable to psychological explanation—e.g., some form of collective hysteria—or to sociological explanation—e.g., that it serves the interests of some faction of the community or the community as a whole to perpetuate a myth.

⁵⁴⁷ “Speak About It 2011,” Bowdoin College, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/sexual-assault/video/speakaboutit.mp4>.

⁵⁴⁸ Matthew Goodrich, “Few Conclusions to Draw from Clery Report,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 21, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6699>.

⁵⁴⁹ “Annual Clery Report 2012: Campus Crime, Fire, Alcohol and Illegal Drugs,” Bowdoin College, Office of Safety and Security, 9, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/security/crime-prevention-personal-safety/campus-crime-report/pdf/2012Campus-Crime-Alcohol-and-Illegal-Drugs-Annual-Report-20123.pdf>.

⁵⁵⁰ Heather Mac Donald makes a similar point. If the one-in-four statistic were correct, and “millions of young women graduate who have suffered the most terrifying assault, short of murder, that a woman can experience,” colleges and universities would have to undertake a “complete revision” of their admissions policies to keep out the “tens of thousands of vicious criminals” they must be letting in, “perhaps banning boys entirely.” “Campus Rape Myth,” 24. Mac Donald drew the conclusion that the colleges and universities that trade in these statistics know they are false and cite them anyway.

Hooking Up at Bowdoin

Like diversity and sustainability, the hookup culture is widespread in American higher education and Bowdoin presents a particular instance that varies from the norm only in detail. The detail, nonetheless, is revealing. The hookup culture is an attempt to make sexual promiscuity an everyday, expected, and legitimate part of campus life. The term “hooking up” is a bit ambiguous, as it can refer to sexual interaction on the spectrum from kissing to sexual intercourse. The defining aspect of hooking up, however, is clear: physical contact with no expectation of emotional attachment or continuing social relationship. Sometimes students who hook up do form a relationship in the sense of becoming frequent sexual partners—though without the expectation of sexual exclusivity or personal commitment.

The establishment of hooking up as a campus expectation and norm has been well described by a number of observers, most recently Nathan Harden in *Sex and God at Yale*. Harden explains:

For most college students, hooking up is the only way to carry on any kind of romantic relationship at all. Dating, in case you haven't heard, is dead. You know the dinner and a movie? Holding hands? That kind of stuff? It's exceeding rare at Yale.

In college, very casual relationships can turn into sex almost instantly. So you can see why it becomes very confusing to students who are trying to figure out which relationships are or are not romantic in nature. After a few beers, almost anyone you meet around campus could be a potential sexual partner.⁵⁵¹

Sociologist Kathleen A. Bogle's 2008 book, *Hooking Up: Sex, Dating, and Relationships on Campus*, offers an extended comparison of the scene at an unnamed large East Coast university and a small Catholic college in the Northeast based on interviews with students and alumni. Her theme is that hooking up is not solely a matter of individual decisions by the participants. Rather, “society is providing a script for them to follow.”⁵⁵²

As already cited, we have a verbatim copy of one version of that script. According to Bowdoin's *Speak About It*:

Whatever you decide you want your relationship with sex to be about there are opportunities out there. Whether you want to have sex or you don't, you're looking for

⁵⁵¹Nathan Harden, *Sex and God at Yale: Porn, Political Correctness, and a Good Education Gone Bad* (New York: Thomas Dunn Books, 2012), 140.

⁵⁵²Kathleen A. Bogle, *Hooking Up: Sex, Dating, and Relationships on Campus* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 6, 9. There is an abundance of scholarly and popular books on hooking up, including Richard D. McNulty, ed., *Sex in College: The Things They Don't Write Home About* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012) and Laura Sessions Stepp, *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose at Both* (New York: Penguin, 2008).

love or a one night stand, you're gay or straight or somewhere in between, it's all possible.⁵⁵³

Members of the Bowdoin community have done some statistical analyses of the college's hookup culture.

During the 2003–2004 academic year, the students in Kristen Ghodsee's Gender and Women's Studies 301 course, "Research and Social Activism," conducted a "Bowdoin Student Life Survey." The survey drew 421 responses, 27 percent of the student body on campus. The *Bowdoin Orient* reported some of its findings:

64 percent said they desired a boyfriend or girlfriend, while 38 percent stated that they were already involved in some sort of relationship.⁵⁵⁴

And:

The women's studies class opted to let respondents define "hook up" for themselves in order to achieve a greater response rate to that particular question. Twenty-seven percent said they "hook up" only while sober, 21 percent are normally "a little tipsy," 28 percent are "heavily buzzed," 18 percent are "pretty trashed," and six percent are "totally wasted."⁵⁵⁵

The terms of these results make the report sound more like satire than social science but the report presented itself and the *Orient* accepted it as serious inquiry. Perhaps the key reported element is that 73 percent of the respondents who said they hook up do so having used some quantity of alcohol. The newspaper article did not include the percentage of Bowdoin students overall who hook up, but other reports at Bowdoin put the figure in the range of 75 percent.

During the 2004–2005 academic year, Ghodsee's "Research and Social Activism" students administered the same survey, this time receiving 461 responses or 28 percent of the student body. The *Orient* reported:

The survey found that 23 percent of students had never hooked up with anyone at Bowdoin, while 53 percent said that they had hooked up with one to five people. Sixteen percent said they had hooked up with six to 10 students, and eight percent said they had hooked up with 11 or more.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵³"Speak About It 2011," Bowdoin College, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/sexual-assault/video/speakaboutit.mp4>.

⁵⁵⁴Alison L. McConnell, "Class Releases 'Hookup' and Drug Use Stats," *Bowdoin Orient*, April 23, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/view/104>.

⁵⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶Beth Kowitt, "And the Survey Says..." *Bowdoin Orient*, April 15, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/911>.

And:

Of the people who had ever been in at least a six month relationship, guys after the relationship ended were able to get back into the hook-up scene, whereas girls had a more difficult time.⁵⁵⁷

Here we learn that 77 percent of Bowdoin students have hooked up with another Bowdoin student, and many more have hooked up with multiple partners. Twenty-four percent have hooked up with more than six students. And 12 percent have hooked up with someone of the same sex.

Men and women experience the hookup culture in different ways. Many of the popular books on the topic are guides for women seeking either to escape the hookup culture or to master it for personal advantage. Most of the more serious books lay out strong evidence that hooking up has large negative consequences for women's mental health and self-esteem. In *Hooking Up*, Bogle struggles to justify the hookup culture in light of her findings, which suggest women's deep discontent with the situation. In a review of *Hooking Up*, Wendy Shalit observes:

Bogle seems to think that young women are wrong to hope for more; she attributes their desire for another relationship to social construction. . . . It never occurs to Bogle that seeking love and connections is a normal and beautiful part of being human.⁵⁵⁸

Bogle fully registers the frustration of campus women that "hookup partners often do not initiate a relationship," but she blames the women for not appreciating the great gift of freedom that their culture has bestowed on them.⁵⁵⁹

Bogle is a strong advocate for the notion that men and women should have the same freedoms, sexual and otherwise, and she frets at the evidence that different psychological needs and expectations persist despite the supposed "equal playing field in the hookup culture on campus."⁵⁶⁰ Some similar concerns are apparent among Bowdoin students. A pair of contributors to the *Bowdoin Orient* responded to the 2004–2005 survey's findings by mounting an argument that Bowdoin men and women have similar patterns of desire for relationships:

In examining the survey results, we find that of men and women not in relationships at Bowdoin, 66 percent of men and 61 percent of women want to be in relationship. Statistically, there is virtually no difference between each sex's desires for commitment.

But you may counter, maybe these groups are lonely and this is why they desire a relationship. However, in examining men and women who are currently in relationships at Bowdoin, the same percentage of men (46 percent) and women (45 percent) presently

⁵⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸Wendy Shalit, "Hookup Ink," *Academic Questions* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2008–09): 95.

⁵⁵⁹Bogle, *Hooking Up*, 69.

⁵⁶⁰Ibid., 125.

have a significant other. Some might argue that these relationships are transient and are unable to disprove traditional thought. However, when evaluating these same students in serious relationships, defined as over six months, once again there is no statistical difference between the percent of men (23 percent) and women (26 percent) on campus willing to commit to another Bowdoin student.⁵⁶¹

The authors apparently sought to show men and women are roughly equal in their desire for long-term committed relationships.

A third set of *Orient* contributors responded to the survey by focusing on the question, “Do you identify as heterosexual?”:

The results are in: 91.3 percent of students identify as heterosexual, leaving a sizeable 8.64 percent of students non-heterosexual. This is a significant increase from last year’s survey, which found 6.5 percent of students identifying as non-straight.⁵⁶²

They add that 12.31 percent of students have “made out with someone of the same sex at Bowdoin.”⁵⁶³ These figures seem unusually high. A national survey of 8,000 college students conducted around the same time reported that “over 97% of both males and females labeled themselves as heterosexual, with the proportion of homosexuals and bisexuals combined constituting nearly 3% of the male sample and about 2% of the female sample.”⁵⁶⁴ There is no apparent explanation why Bowdoin’s gay, lesbian, and bisexual student population would be nearly three times the national rate.

In the 2008–2009 academic year, the *Orient* undertook its own survey “about dating and relationship experiences,” to which 583 students, or 34 percent of Bowdoin’s student body, responded.⁵⁶⁵ The article warned, “If you want to date, don’t come to Bowdoin,” and quoted Branden Asemah (Class of 2012): “the drunken hook-up has taken the place of the date.”⁵⁶⁶ The survey’s findings support Asemah. A graph in the *Orient* shows that only about 16 percent of students had no “sexual or romantic interactions” at Bowdoin. Nearly 60 percent had at least one “one night hook-up.” About 58 percent had “multiple hook-ups...with the same person but without a relationship.” Approximately 38 percent have been in a “committed relationship,” and approximately 12 percent have been in a “casual relationship.” According to the poll, the article’s authors reported that,

⁵⁶¹Fariha Mahmud and Alana Wooley, “Are Men Really Commitment-Phobic?” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 15, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/928>.

⁵⁶²Nicole Levasseur and Heather Day, “Redefining Sexuality,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 22, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/963>.

⁵⁶³Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴Lee Ellis, Brian Robb, and Donald Burke, “Sexual Orientation in the United States and Canadian College Students,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 34, no. 5 (October 2005): 569–81.

⁵⁶⁵Emily Guerin and Mary Helen Miller, “Hung Up on Hook-Ups,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 12, 2008, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4016>.

⁵⁶⁶Ibid.

Seventy-five percent of students that have hooked up at Bowdoin reported that alcohol at least sometimes significantly influenced their decision.

More women than men answered the survey:

Sixty-three percent of respondents were female and 37 percent male.⁵⁶⁷

In contrast to the 2004–2005 survey by the “Research and Social Activism” class, only 4 percent of the respondents described themselves as homosexual, and 3 percent described themselves as bisexual.

The *Orient* survey also included some student testimony. Christopher Fung (Class of 2012) anticipated the freedom to hook up before enrolling at Bowdoin: “A lot of people come to college thinking they’re going to be hooking up with a lot of people.” Barrett Brown (Class of 2009) found hooking up convenient, calling it “a quick fix with more limited commitment.” Erin York (Class of 2009) explained that after hooking up with someone while drunk it is customary for the partners to avoid one another—an experience she said “hurt a lot.” Margot Farrell Clark (Class of 2009) remarked that hooking up is necessary, because it is the “only outlet for interacting with the opposite sex.” George Aumoithe (Class of 2011) feared that “queer”⁵⁶⁸ students did not have the same sexual opportunities as straight students did: “The general hook-up culture doesn’t allow for someone who’s just come out to safely develop their sexuality.”⁵⁶⁹

Hayley McHugh (Class of 2009) sounded much like some of the students Bogle interviewed in *Hooking Up*,⁵⁷⁰ praising the hookup culture as liberated women, but criticizing it for being cold, impersonal, and exploitative:

I think it’s almost liberating now that both men and women can make the choice to just hook up.

But:

I have seen people cry the next day or the next week when they are not contacted by somebody they just spent the night with, and that’s unhealthy because it can have lasting consequences on your self-esteem.⁵⁷¹

The hookup seems to be the dominant mode of sexual activity at Bowdoin. The *Orient* survey defined hooking up as “anything from kissing to having sex,” but “committed relationships” are left undefined.⁵⁷² Did the students in a committed relationship hook up with

⁵⁶⁷Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸“Queer” is a widely used term on the Bowdoin campus. In the relevant sections which discuss Bowdoin’s “LGBTQ” students, the authors of the report will follow Bowdoin’s lead and use “queer” as an umbrella term to comprise all of the pertinent individuals.

⁵⁶⁹Guerin and Miller, “Hung Up on Hook-Ups.”

⁵⁷⁰Bogle, *Hooking Up*, 184.

⁵⁷¹Guerin and Miller, “Hung Up on Hook-Ups.”

⁵⁷²Ibid.

someone under the influence of alcohol, and then transform this sexual encounter into a committed relationship? What behaviors and practices constitute a committed relationship? Are these committed relationships precursors to marriage, domestic partnership, or nothing at all? How many of them involve engaging in sex, and how many don't? How many commitments have been broken? We are simply told that

[o]f students who have been involved in a committed relationship at Bowdoin, only 23 percent have had more than one. For seniors who have had relationships at Bowdoin, only 32 percent have been in more than one.⁵⁷³

A November 2009 *Orient* article reported on a sex survey conducted by a campus group called Sex 101.⁵⁷⁴ The survey, which received 314 responses, reported that 43 percent of the respondents were “sexually active and monogamous.” And another 15 percent have had no sexual interaction, which, it reported, “is a number that isn’t typically discussed on campus.” The rest of the survey dealt with masturbation habits, favored sexual positions, and how men preferred their female sexual partner to prepare pubic hair.⁵⁷⁵ A December 2009 article reported on an *Orient* survey “to learn about orgasms at Bowdoin,” to which 272 students responded.⁵⁷⁶ The survey compared the percentage of male and female students who reported that they “had achieved orgasm”—98.3 and 78.3 percent, respectively—and classified the circumstances of their orgasms, e.g., during masturbation, oral sex, from penetration, or clitoral stimulation.⁵⁷⁷ It also reported how many times a week students orgasmed. According to the survey, on average, Bowdoin women have 3.35 orgasms per week, and men have 5.26.⁵⁷⁸

An October 2010 *Orient* article reported on Bowdoin’s Spring 2009 Health and Wellness Survey.⁵⁷⁹ It received 934 respondents, of which 42.8 percent were men and 56.9 were women. Survey results indicated that 68 percent of students had been sexually active the prior academic year, and of those students, 67 percent had sex while intoxicated. Furthermore:

Thirty-nine percent had sex they later regretted and men were more likely to regret a sexual encounter than women.⁵⁸⁰

The article does not specify how many more men than women regretted their sexual encounter. Nor does it clarify the source of their regret.

⁵⁷³Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴Evan Boucher and Keri Forbringer, “Sex Survey: Partner Communication Is Key,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 6, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4740>.

⁵⁷⁵Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶Elissa Rodman and Mike Eldridge, “Explosive Results: Observing the ‘O,’” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 4, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4824>.

⁵⁷⁷Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹Nora Biette-Timmons, “Health Survey Shows Drink and Sleep Binging,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 29, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5717>.

⁵⁸⁰Ibid.

Such surveys seem to be a Bowdoin obsession. Perhaps most illuminating is its most recent survey, conducted by the Alliance for Sexual Assault Prevention, which released its findings “on sexual norms at Bowdoin” on April 20, 2012. The survey received 476 responses from students, 63 percent of whom identified as women. According to the survey, 26 percent of respondents said that they had “some form of sex on Saturday, April 7, [2012].”⁵⁸¹ If this sample group accurately reflects the Bowdoin student body as whole, then approximately 462 Bowdoin students had sex on that one Saturday.

A November 2007 *Orient* article, “Bowdoin Marries Out of the Bubble,” added a few details: according to data from the Bowdoin Alumni Relations Office, about 11.5 percent of Bowdoin students marry each other.⁵⁸² The article is vague about the population it refers to, but seems to describe total living alumni. In the 1990s, the percentage was higher: “Out of 4,149 Bowdoin alumni, 616, or just under 15 percent, married other Bowdoin alumni,” down from 18.6 percent in 1991.⁵⁸³

The data suggests a steady decline in the intermarriage of Bowdoin students, which is consistent with a pattern noted by observers of the hookup culture on other campuses. Hooking up decreases the likelihood of marriage between partners, and a community that fosters it erodes the social dynamics that lead to marriage.

One Bowdoin alumna offered a firsthand account of the animus against marriage among students. Jamilah Gregory (Class of 2011), who got married while enrolled, told the *Orient* in 2010 that her marital status brought some hardship, and was poorly received by many at Bowdoin.⁵⁸⁴ Describing students’ reactions to her marriage, Gregory said, “Other people perceive [marriage] as binding and restrictive.... Somehow people see married people as less intellectual, ignorant or naive.” Gregory felt an anti-marriage bias among her classmates: “There were so many reactions when we decided to get married. Sometimes I felt judgment and I tried to understand why.”⁵⁸⁵ The *Orient* reported that Gregory’s marriage “shocked” classmates. It quoted one classmate, who said, “[I]f you get married, it’s as if you’re putting education behind your romantic life,” adding, “But, I guess if you believe strongly enough that you’re going to get married, go ahead.”⁵⁸⁶

Contraception

Bowdoin provides its students with free contraception. Bowdoin staff place bowls of Trojan condoms in every residential building: Appleton Hall, Baxter House, Brunswick

⁵⁸¹Sam Miller, “‘Consent Is Sexy’ Week Fights Sexual Misconduct,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 20, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7223>.

⁵⁸²Sarah Pritzker, “Bowdoin Marries out of the Bubble,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 2, 2007, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3020>.

⁵⁸³Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴Melody Hahn, “Chapel Bells: Married Students from Past to Present,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 23, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5338>.

⁵⁸⁵Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶Ibid.

Apartments, Burnett House, Chamberlain Hall, Cleaveland Street Apartments, Coleman Hall, Coles Tower, Harpswell Street Apartments, Helmreich House, Howard Hall, Howell House, Hyde Hall, Ladd House, MacMillan House, Maine Hall, Mayflower Apartments, Moore Hall, Osher Hall, Pine Street Apartments, Quinby House, Reed House, Smith House, Stowe Hall, Stowe Inn, West Hall, and Winthrop Hall. The supply of condoms is replenished by a resident assistant.

Condoms are also available in Moulton Union, home of the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, the Dudley Coe Student Health Center, and the Counseling Center in the Herbert Ross Brown House.

The Dudley Coe Health Center also distributes free contraception to female students. A February 2005 *Orient* article reported that “48 percent of women at Bowdoin are taking hormonal contraceptives, making these medications the most heavily used by Bowdoin students.”⁵⁸⁷ A December 2005 *Orient* interview quoted Jeff Benson, a former college physician at Bowdoin, as saying, “[B]irth control was, by far, the most commonly prescribed medication at the health center.”⁵⁸⁸ From December 2004 to December 2005, the Dudley Coe Health Center “distributed 3,288 packs of oral contraceptive pills.”⁵⁸⁹

Today, the Dudley Coe Health Center provides Plan B as free “emergency contraception” for women.⁵⁹⁰

Sexually Transmitted Infections

An April 2007 *Orient* article reported, “According to Physician Associate Andree Appel at the health center, the incidence of gonorrhea and chlamydia on campus is relatively low, moderate for herpes and quite high for HPV, as the health center sees a number of abnormal paps and cases of genital warts.”⁵⁹¹

On March 7, 2012, Whitney Hogan, coordinator of health education, emailed Bowdoin’s first-year students, warning them that there was “an uptick in STIs on campus, including chlamydia, syphilis, herpes, and gonorrhea.”⁵⁹² The *Orient* reported that Hogan “reminded students to practice safer sex and use condoms.”⁵⁹³ The Health Center did not characterize the “uptick” further.

⁵⁸⁷Krystal Barker, “One-Half of Campus Reports Rx Drug Use,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 25, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/788>.

⁵⁸⁸Will Jacob and Gemma Leghorn, “Decade in Review: Health and Wellness,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 26, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5126>.

⁵⁸⁹Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰“Emergency Contraception,” Bowdoin College, Health Issues, Health Services, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/health/health-issues/ec2004.shtml>.

⁵⁹¹Lauren McGrath, “STDs Do Not Discriminate,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 13, 2007, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/2573>.

⁵⁹²Amanda Minoff, “Upswing in STI Cases Prompts More Students to Seek Testing,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 27, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7265>.

⁵⁹³Sophia Cheng, “Uptick in Sexually Transmitted Infections,” *Bowdoin Orient*, March 30, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7141>.

The Women's Resource Center and the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity

In May 2000, the Oversight Committee on the Status of Women at Bowdoin College released its annual report.⁵⁹⁴ During spring 2000 the Oversight Committee had formed two subcommittees:

One concerned with problems of the “chilly climate” in and out of the classroom and the second concerned with problems of advancement and salary compensation for the support staff at Bowdoin College.⁵⁹⁵

The first subcommittee was named the Subcommittee on Finding a Voice at Bowdoin. Its purpose was to attend to “the problems of women finding a voice.”⁵⁹⁶ One problem the subcommittee identified was that most Bowdoin women did not know that they had lost their voice in the first place. To inform them, the subcommittee devised a “student entrance and exit questionnaire...with a two-fold goal”:

- a) To educate students to the fact that they often resort to “the silent mode”;
- b) And to gather more information about when and why this occurs, both in and out of the classroom.⁵⁹⁷

The task of overcoming the “chilly climate” and helping Bowdoin women find their “voice” fell to two internal bodies: the Women's Studies Program (as it was then called) and the Women's Resource Center (WRC), established in 1980.⁵⁹⁸

The Oversight Committee on the Status of Women at Bowdoin imagined the WRC playing a “very important role in addressing the issue of a chilly or silencing climate for women,”⁵⁹⁹ and in its annual report described the work of the WRC director, who

reports to the Dean of Student Affairs Office, and whose job it is to organize an annual series of large-scale and small-scale events to support the development of women students at Bowdoin and raise awareness of issues important to women at Bowdoin and beyond.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁴“Annual Report: Oversight Committee on the Status of Women at Bowdoin College,” May 2000, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁵⁹⁵Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶Ibid.

⁵⁹⁷Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸“Women's Resource Center,” Forty Years: The History of Women at Bowdoin, a Class Project of GWS 280–Fall 2011, <http://research.bowdoin.edu/forty-years-the-history-of-women-at-bowdoin/the-womens-resource-center/>.

⁵⁹⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰Ibid.

The WRC director also advises various groups at Bowdoin devoted to issues surrounding consent and sexual assault:

In addition, the Director of the WRC works with the Bowdoin Women’s Association and Safe Space, the student organization supporting survivors of sexual assault, to coordinate their activities on essential issues for women.⁶⁰¹

At the time, 24 College Street, a small two-floor building on the Bowdoin campus, housed both the Women’s Resource Center and the Women’s Studies Program. Eventually, women’s studies moved to the Boody-Johnson House, and in 2004–2005 the unoccupied space was filled by the Queer-Trans Resource Center.⁶⁰² According to Bowdoin’s 2006 *Self-Study*, “the Women’s Resource Center broadened its mission in 2004–05 and is now known as the WRC/Queer Trans Resource Center and has a part-time staff person working with the Bowdoin Queer Straight Alliance (BQSA) to assist in their programming efforts.”⁶⁰³ The Queer-Trans Resource Center subsequently changed its name to the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity (RCSGD).

Today, 24 College Street is the main source of feminist and “queer-related” extracurricular activities and advocacy at Bowdoin. Both are overseen by Bowdoin employees who work with the dean’s office and residential life. While the WRC director is employed to promote “awareness” of women’s issues, the RCSGD director is tasked with “educating the campus community” about queer issues. The mission of the WRC, according to its website:

is to support and enhance the academic, personal, and extracurricular development of women at Bowdoin, and to build awareness of gender issues existing on campus and in society.⁶⁰⁴

The RCSGD

is designed to provide support to Bowdoin’s gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning and straight populations. It is dedicated to educating the campus community about sexuality and gender identity and offers an array of educational brochures.⁶⁰⁵

While these organizations maintain distinct missions, and each has its own staff member, there are no clear-cut boundaries between the two in their shared facility. WRC and RCSGD materials are piled on the same tables, pinned to the same walls, and taped to the same doors. According to a 2009 *Orient* article, when Liz Greason left her position as director of the WRC, Kate Stern, the director of the RCSGD—who self-identifies as a lesbian in a video for prospective students—

⁶⁰¹Ibid.

⁶⁰²*The Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2006), 66.

⁶⁰³Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴“Women’s Resource Center,” Bowdoin College, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/womens-resource-center/index.shtml>.

⁶⁰⁵“Bowdoin Queer Web,” Bowdoin College, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/queer/resource-center-for-sexual-and-gender-diversity/index.shtml>.

filled in as interim director.⁶⁰⁶ According to Allen Delong, director of student life, Stern had initially been a “finalist for the both the QTRC and the WRC director positions.”⁶⁰⁷

The WRC and the RCSGD are meant to be resources for students but also platforms from which female and “queer” students can project their vision of gender and sexuality into the larger community.

Michael Toscano visited 24 College Street in March 2012. Among the printed materials on the table by the entrance of the WRC and RCSGD shared space he found:

- a brochure from “Bowdoin Health Services”
- a brochure from “Maine Women’s Lobby”
- a brochure from Planned Parenthood about “Emergency Contraception”
- volumes of *Q*, a Bowdoin student-authored “initiative to bring light to gay, lesbian, transgendered and queer issues on campus and in the world”⁶⁰⁸
- *Speak*, a student digest “Brought to you by VDAY: UNTIL THE VIOLENCE STOPS,” which compiles “Bowdoin students’ stories about sex: the good, the bad, and everything in between”⁶⁰⁹
- *The Only Question That Matters: Do People Choose Their Sexual Orientation?*—a pamphlet that seeks to settle the question on which “the raging debate about gay rights ultimately turns”⁶¹⁰
- *You Are Not Alone*, a “Bowdoin College Resource Guide for Survivors of Sexual Violence and Their Supporters”
- *Women: What You Need to Know Abroad*, a CIEE brochure explaining that “different people have different ideas about what it means to be a woman.” Women are warned that not every culture “will ensure equal opportunity for women,” but this should not be seen as a reason to keep foreign people “at arm’s length.” Rather, “part of immersing yourself may be dating a local man or woman”⁶¹¹
- *The F-Word*, “a publication of the Bowdoin Women’s Association,” which encourages “dialogue on a range of campus issues, particularly that which pertains to gender and

⁶⁰⁶The video can be found on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0432961P3Qs>. Mary Helen Miller, “Bowdoin Brief: QTRC Director to Act as WRC Interim Director,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 30, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4084>.

⁶⁰⁷Ibid.

⁶⁰⁸*Q: A GLBTQ Literary Magazine by Bowdoin Students*, <http://students.bowdoin.edu/q-magazine/past-issues/>.

⁶⁰⁹*Speak*, Bowdoin College, Student Digests, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/digests/entry.jsp?timestamp=20091108222501&dow=1&type=student&week=200946&author=sdavies2>.

⁶¹⁰Chandler Burr, *The Only Question That Matters: Do People Choose Their Sexual Orientation?* (Washington, DC: Liberty Education Forum, 2005), http://libertyeducationforum.org/docs/whitepapers/the_only_question_that_matters.pdf.

⁶¹¹CIEE, *Women: What You Need to Know Abroad*, 2–3, <http://www.ciee.org/gap-year-abroad/downloads/school-resources/Women.pdf>.

sexuality.” It offers this maxim: “So much can be discussed on campus, yet so little is heard”⁶¹²

- *Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity*, a brochure advertising the RCSGD’s values, such as “Acceptance for people’s complete identities, including sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic class, age, and ability,” and “Individualism in the coming out process”⁶¹³
- *Creating Space for Change*, a brochure from the Bowdoin Counseling Service
- *Sex and Relationships Resources at Bowdoin!* a small flyer that offers relationship advice, including “Give each other breast and/or testicular exams,” “Scan each other for moles in areas that are hard to find,” “Get tested for STDs at the health center together,” and “Experiment with healthy meal-making...naked ☺”
- “Power and Me,” a handout that instructs participants to ask these questions: “How am I a powerful woman?” “How do I manifest my power in the world?” and “What’s my current perspective on my own power?”
- “Here Are Some Useful Definitions,” a two-page compilation of “terminology” that defines how “LGBTIQ folks define themselves.” Definitions include:
 - *biphobia*: “the irrational fear and intolerance of people who are bisexual”
 - *genderism*: “Holding people to traditional expectations based on gender”
 - *heterosexism*: “The assumption that all people are heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior or preferable to homo- or bisexuality”
 - *gender diversity*: “As gender is a socially constructed system of classification that ascribes qualities of masculinity or femininity to people, gender diversity is the understanding that the ways in which people express their masculinity or femininity varies between people, can be fluid and can change over time”
- “Anonymous Report Form for Sexual Misconduct”

The “Anonymous Report Form for Sexual Misconduct” can be slipped into a wooden box that sits at the end of the table, across from the bowl of free condoms.

The Women’s Resource Center

The Women’s Resource Center was established with the assistance of the college administration by the Bowdoin Women’s Association (BWA) in 1980. It has been directed by a

⁶¹²Bowdoin Women’s Association, *The F-Word* (Fall 2010), 2. See <http://bowdoinfeminist.wordpress.com/>.

⁶¹³Bowdoin College, *Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity*, 2. See <http://www.bowdoin.edu/queer/resource-center-for-sexual-and-gender-diversity/index.shtml>.

Bowdoin staff member since 1983.⁶¹⁴ According to research done in Jennifer Scanlon’s Fall 2011 Gender and Women’s Studies Course 280, “Forty Years: The History of Women at Bowdoin,” the BWA was loosely formed in 1972.⁶¹⁵ Scanlon’s student researchers uncovered a 1975–1976 funding request from the BWA to the college. The request reveals that from its earliest years the BWA was specifically concerned with achieving the social goods associated with second-wave feminism. To the request, “Briefly describe the major functions and activities carried out by your organization during the current academic year,” the BWA answered (in part): “Birth Control + Female Sexuality...panel + presentation by family planning,” “Breast Cancer + Self Examination,” and “Birth Control as a shared responsibility.”⁶¹⁶ The request specified that the BWA’s purpose is to “give men and in particular women a chance to meet other women.” Looking back on the BWA’s early years, Patricia “Barney” Geller, one of its founders, told the “Forty Years” students, “Co-education remained controversial and while less hostile with the senior class gone, there was still an atmosphere that we were guests at a male college.”⁶¹⁷

When the WRC opened its doors in 1980, the BWA’s vision of its purpose was expansive. The “Bowdoin Women’s Association Women’s Resource Center Committee” published a letter to the editor in the February 22, 1980, *Orient* in which it explained that “the need for a Resource Center seems evident when one considers the continuing lack of knowledge about the existence and contribution of women, historically and in the present.”⁶¹⁸ The committee added: “We feel that the proposed Resource Center will be a place for the Bowdoin community to develop a critical approach and explore meta-traditional ways of learning, thinking and knowing.”⁶¹⁹ The WRC today continues more or less in this role as a source of critiques of Bowdoin’s history, both prior to and after coeducation.

The WRC recently cosponsored with the outdoor activities group known as the Bowdoin Outing Club the “Wild Women Adventure” series. Wild Women Adventures are nature-based activities such as hiking, climbing, and chopping down trees, designed to teach women skills—like rock climbing, sawing techniques, getting on a surfboard, and rolling a kayak—that develop confidence.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁴“Proposal for a Women’s Resource Center,” February 5, 1980, Forty Years: The History of Women at Bowdoin, A Class Project of GWS 280—Fall 2011, <http://research.bowdoin.edu/forty-years-the-history-of-women-at-bowdoin/womens-resource-center/proposal-for-womens-resource-center/>.

⁶¹⁵“1975 Funding Request and Constitution for the Bowdoin Women’s Association,” April 1975, Forty Years: The History of Women at Bowdoin, A Class Project of GWS 280—Fall 2011, <http://research.bowdoin.edu/forty-years-the-history-of-women-at-bowdoin/extracurricular-activities/1975-funding-request-and-constitution-for-the-bowdoin-womens-association/>.

⁶¹⁶Ibid.

⁶¹⁷Ibid.

⁶¹⁸“Proposal for a Women’s Resource Center.”

⁶¹⁹Ibid.

⁶²⁰“Q&A: Melissa Quinby on the Wild Adventures of Bowdoin Women,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, February 10, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2012/02/qa-melissa-quinby-on-the-wild-adventures-of-bowdoin-women/>.

Some other events sponsored in the last few years by the WRC include annual performances of *The Vagina Monologues*, annual Take Back the Night marches, lectures such as “The Female Orgasm” (September 2006) and “Assuming the Ecosexual Position: Adventures of the Love Art Lab” (April 2011), and the Bowdoin Women in Business Spring Convention.⁶²¹

Queer Bowdoin

Homosexuality is a prominent theme in Bowdoin student culture. It is the subject of special events, student organizations, *Orient* articles, a dedicated magazine, other special publications, and campus controversy.

On November 5 and 6, 2011, Bowdoin hosted the third Annual New England Small Colleges Queer Summit.⁶²² The summit’s keynote speaker was Conner Habib, blogger and gay porn star (e.g., *Locker Room Spy Guy* [2010], “*Hot House Backroom, Vol. 22*”). Claire Aasen (Class of 2014), reporting for the *Orient*, described the keynote speech:

Habib’s talk touched on the idea of the body as an object and on the place of sex in American culture. During the question and answer session that followed, Habib fielded questions about the link between love and sex and the experience of having sex on camera.⁶²³

And other summit activities:

In addition to the keynote address, participants were invited to attend workshops on topics ranging from body image to asexuality to sex toys. Other events included a formal sex etiquette dinner and a party at Helmreich House.⁶²⁴

In response to campus murmurs, Jose Cespedes (Class of 2012), writing in the *Orient*, defended Habib as keynote speaker by defending the porn industry: “Though it may be an obscure and controversial industry, it should be noted that pornography also generates millions of dollars.”⁶²⁵ Cespedes saw the choice of Habib as part of the larger narrative of the “gay American experience,” which has demonstrated “an ability to overcome fear in order to express oneself frankly and openly.”⁶²⁶ Cespedes encouraged his classmates to be more than just “accepting” of

⁶²¹“Take Back the Night” marches began in Belgium in 1976 and have become a common occurrence on American college and university campuses. They are intended to draw attention to and protest violence against women. As we have documented, the Bowdoin community has a very low incidence of reported assaults.

⁶²²“Bowdoin’s Queer Summit Nov. 5 & 6,” Facebook, October 21, 2011, <http://www.facebook.com/notes/a-gblt-on-rye/bowdoins-queer-summit-nov-5-6/307978425883336>.

⁶²³Claire Aasen, “Bowdoin Brief: New England Small College Queer Summit Draws Crowd,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 11, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6810>.

⁶²⁴Ibid.

⁶²⁵Jose Cespedes, “Queer Conference Is Opportunity to Appreciate Gay History,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 4, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6761>.

⁶²⁶Ibid.

the “LGBTQ” community at Bowdoin. They should educate themselves about how their “friends, neighbors and coworkers are being marginalized in their own country.”⁶²⁷

On March 30, 2012, the *Orient* published “Queer at Bowdoin,” Samuel Frizell’s essay on “student activism” among the college’s “queer” students. In a section on “Homophobia at Bowdoin,” Frizell (Class of 2012) admitted that “Instances of blatant homophobia are rare at Bowdoin” but argued that “homophobia persists despite the College’s insistence on tolerance.”⁶²⁸ Frizell cited a number of instances in which townspeople from Brunswick shouted epithets at some of Bowdoin’s “queer” students. He also recounted the incident that provoked the “I Am Bowdoin” protest in March 2011, when someone wrote a slur (anti-gay and racist) on the whiteboard in Coles Tower. Frizell’s other examples of Bowdoin student homophobia were less clear. He quoted one student who believed her Frisbee teammates assumed she was straight and expected her to “hookup with teammates of the opposite gender,” which made her feel “deeply uncomfortable.” This student was distressed at this “really heteronormative experience” and “felt very pressured by older women on the team to be hooking up with guys.” She added: “That was never said overtly, but I felt that as a pressure.” Later in the article, she expressed frustration that a male student once told her that he supported gay marriage while they were on the dance floor. She recounted that she told him, “You know, I’m not really thinking about marriage at this moment.”

Another student felt “tokenized” by students who treated him as their “gay friend.” Other students did not feel that there was any homophobia at Bowdoin, but expressed some annoyance that the conversation surrounding queerness was often awkward and that a number of students evinced “ignorance of queer issues.”⁶²⁹

“Homophobia” at Bowdoin—traditionally understood as an irrational fear of homosexuality but redefined at Bowdoin as the persistence of heterosexual norms and some uncertainty among straight students about how best to affirm their gay friends’ sexuality—appears difficult to document, but Bowdoin has several groups dedicated to overcoming it. Frizell called the Bowdoin Queer Straight Alliance “the College’s primary campus group for queer students, students questioning their sexuality, and straight supporters.” According to Frizell, the Bowdoin Queer Straight Alliance “has played an increasingly active role in promoting awareness for queer life on campus.”⁶³⁰ Frizell described these efforts: “They organized queer-themed social house parties, film screenings, Coming Out Week, and Yellow Shirt Day, all designed to promote solidarity among Bowdoin’s queer population and acceptance among students who identify as straight.” The Alliance has also worked to incorporate queer

⁶²⁷Ibid.

⁶²⁸Samuel Frizell, “Queer at Bowdoin: Student Activism Has Changed What It Means To Be Queer at Bowdoin, but Some Students Say It’s Not Enough,” *Bowdoin Orient*, March 30, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7118>.

⁶²⁹Ibid.

⁶³⁰Ibid.

students more heavily into Date Week and to make Consent Is Sexy Week “more queer-encompassing.”

Some self-identified queer students are dissatisfied with the efforts of the Bowdoin Queer Straight Alliance. Isa Abney (Class of 2011), for example, is quoted by Frizell as criticizing the Alliance for its lack of “passion and urgency.” Abney’s disaffection was shared by George Aumoithe (Class of 2011), who with Abney started *Q Magazine* in 2007 to more fully “address the challenges that queer students faced on campus, as well as celebrate queer life at Bowdoin.”⁶³¹

Q Magazine is a thirty to forty-page collection of essays, fiction, poetry, and black and white drawings and photographs. The Fall 2008 cover, for example, presents a photograph of a young woman in a kitchen placing her face into the crotch of another woman. Issue content consists of eight items:

- “The Water Closet,” by editor-in-chief George Aumoithe Jr., an essay ruminating on whether Bowdoin College is “queer-friendly” that urges a “widening of the closet”
- “My Friend Peter,” by La’Shaye Ervin, a reminiscence by a Rastafarian student of a moment in high school when a fellow Rastafarian student came out of the closet to him
- “Deviation: Photographs,” by Alanna Beroiza, eleven photographs including a woman kneeling, her hands bound with handcuffs; two male students, black and white, holding hands across a cafeteria table; a woman nude from the waist up, wearing a necktie and a Dick Cheney mask. In the brief accompanying note Beroiza explains that the images “are meant to be visual representations of this deviance that lies within each and every one of us”
- “The Men’s Hockey Team Is Queer-Friendly?” by Isa Abney, co-founder, extolling a group calling itself “Men’s Hockey Against Homophobia”
- “Tolerance,” by Claudia Williams, a free-verse effusion about her attraction in third grade to another girl and her dislike of the word “tolerance” because of “the hatred hidden in that word”
- “Wayward Journeys: A Progression in Love,” by Lucia Cowles, a short story in which a lesbian on a cross-country road trip with a male driver reminisces about her absent girlfriend
- “On an Early Winter Morning,” by Sean Campos, a short story of a young man keeping company with his older male lover, a college professor who is dying of cancer

⁶³¹Ibid.

- “Damned Straight?” by Emma Verrill, a satire describing the moment she came out to her parents as straight and her determination to fight for her rights as straight⁶³²

The other issues of *Q Magazine* are similar in every respect.

When Abney complained to Frizell about the Bowdoin Queer Straight Alliance, he took note of “questions or issues” it failed to discuss, such as “how to deal with being gay [when] three of your roommates are jock bros.”⁶³³ *Q Magazine* is intended to be an answer to such questions.

In the “Transgender Student Guide: Bowdoin College,” Bowdoin’s Transgender Working Group defined “transgender” as an “umbrella term” for

any individual who does not conform to society’s expectations of what it means to be male or female, often an individual whose gender identity does not “match” their sex [assigned at birth].⁶³⁴ (brackets in original)

While the guide is “a collaboration of the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity, Counseling Center, Student Health Services, the Office of the Registrar, the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, the Office of Residential Life, the Department of Athletics, and the Office of Student Aid,” readers are reassured that

there are many other lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and questioning (LGBTIQ) friendly staff and faculty on campus.⁶³⁵

Wherever one spots a “Safe Zone sticker” on campus, one is assured to find “an ally trained about sexual orientation and gender identity.”⁶³⁶

In addition to the resources mentioned above, the “Transgender Student Guide” lists these additional campus allies, including OUTPeers and Q&A.⁶³⁷ OUTPeers “is a group of comfortably out gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and non-heterosexual students available to offer confidential support to all students interested in discussing issues of sexuality and gender.”⁶³⁸ A November 2011 *Orient* article quotes Kate Stern, aforementioned director of the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity: “We’ll have 40 OutPeers this year.”⁶³⁹ Q&A

⁶³² *Q: A GLBTQ Literary Magazine by Bowdoin Students* 2, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 1–30. See <http://students.bowdoin.edu/q-magazine/past-issues/>.

⁶³³ Frizell, “Queer at Bowdoin.”

⁶³⁴ “Transgender Student Guide: Bowdoin College,” updated June 2012, 1, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/queer/pdf/trans-student-guide.pdf>.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ Nora Biette-Timmons, “Participation in SafeSpace, OutPeer, OutAlly on the Rise,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 4, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6757>.

“is the Bowdoin faculty/staff network dedicated to supporting LGBTIQ prospective and current staff/faculty and students.”⁶⁴⁰

The RCSGD also trains a group called OutAllies—“straight students who complete training to provide support for the LGBTIQ community at Bowdoin.”⁶⁴¹ According to Stern: “We just trained another 40 OutAllies and there are 60 or so waiting to be trained,” and the *Orient* article reported that the list of OutAllies included 200 names in fall 2011.⁶⁴²

The “Transgender Student Guide” listed as well a number of “Administrative Resources,” including the Department of Athletics. In the eventuality that an athlete undergoes a sex change, the guide specifies that

a student transitioning from female to male and who is engaged in hormone treatments may play on a men’s team, but not a women’s team. A student transitioning from male to female, may play on a women’s team after completing one calendar year of testosterone suppression.⁶⁴³

Bowdoin’s athletics department has become among the most significant supporters of the college’s “queer” groups. On January 21, 2012, the department, on behalf of former athletic director Jeffrey Ward, distributed an email addressed “Dear Coaches,” informing them that Bowdoin would be holding a series of extracurricular activities called “Beyond the Bowdoin Hello,” which Ward described as discussions “about difference and belonging.”⁶⁴⁴ To illustrate the importance of such discussions, he pointed to Brian Burke, the headline speaker the year before at “Anything but Straight in Athletics,” an annual Bowdoin event.⁶⁴⁵ Burke, president and general manager of the Toronto Maple Leafs, had told the *Orient* that he wanted “to throw the weight of an NHL front office at the issue”—the issue of bias against gays in athletics.⁶⁴⁶ Ward continued: “Last year, I thought Brian Burke’s comment about us needing to move beyond tolerance to acceptance was incredibly powerful and important. It rings true as we think of all the groups that make up our teams and our campus,” adding:

Please strongly encourage your teams to attend and participate in some of these programs. I am very hopeful that you will do the same.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁰Ibid.

⁶⁴¹Ibid.

⁶⁴²Ibid.

⁶⁴³“Transgender Student Guide,” 4.

⁶⁴⁴Jeffrey Ward, “[Athletic Department] Special Programing,” email message to athleticdept@list.bowdoin.edu, January 21, 2012.

⁶⁴⁵Charles Cubeta, “NHL GM Brian Burke Headlines ‘Anything But Straight’ Events,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 1, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6248>.

⁶⁴⁶Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷Ward, “[Athletic Department] Special Programing.”

The most significant part of Bowdoin’s former athletic director’s email was Ward’s urging athletes and coaches “to move beyond tolerance to acceptance.” Bowdoin’s *NEASC Fifth Year Report* estimated that “approximately 40% of students participate in varsity athletics.”⁶⁴⁸ This large cohort of students has substantial influence over campus culture.

In February 2012 Bowdoin held its third annual Anything But Straight in Athletics, an event organized by the Department of Athletics and the RCSGD.⁶⁴⁹ Paul Tagliabue, former commissioner of the National Football League, spoke to “about 64 student athletes” on the subject of combatting “homophobia” in sports.⁶⁵⁰ According to the *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, Tagliabue—quoting Dr. Martin Luther King—exhorted the athletes to fight for civil rights:

Whatever career you may choose for yourself—doctor, lawyer, teacher—let me propose an avocation to be pursued along with it. Become a dedicated fighter for civil rights. Make it a central part of your life....Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for human rights.⁶⁵¹

Jeffrey Ward, speaking to the *Orient*, explained the involvement of Bowdoin athletics in support of “gay rights”:

Teams are strong organizations, and if we get teams to work against homophobia and homophobic language, it would have a pretty big impact on the campus.⁶⁵²

On June 1, 2012, it was announced that Ward would be vacating the position of director of athletics to pursue other career opportunities. Timothy Ryan, his interim successor, continued Ward’s support for Anything But Straight in Athletics. In a November 7, 2012, email to the athletics department, Ryan briefly described the event and strongly urged attendance:

Boston Herald columnist Steve Buckley...will give a talk regarding his experience with homophobia in sports and a panel of three students will share their experiences on our campus. This is a great opportunity for students to learn more about homophobia in sports and the supportive environment we strive to provide within our Athletic Department.⁶⁵³

The athletics department also participates heavily in Yellow Shirt Day, when students show “support for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or questioning (LGBTIQ)

⁶⁴⁸Bowdoin College, *New England Association of Schools and Colleges Fifth Year Report* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2011), 3.

⁶⁴⁹“Homophobia in Sports: Tagliabue Speaks of ‘Making a Career of Humanity’: Student-Athletes Speak Out,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, February 15, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2012/02/tagliabue-speaks-of-homophobia-and-making-a-career-of-humanity>.

⁶⁵⁰Ibid.

⁶⁵¹Ibid.

⁶⁵²Sam Miller, “NFL’s Tagliabue to Headline Anything But Straight,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 10, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7006>.

⁶⁵³Timothy Ryan, “[Athletic Department] Anything but Straight in Athletics—Thursday 8:00 PM,” email message to athleticdept@list.bowdoin.edu, January 21, 2012.

community by donning yellow shirts.”⁶⁵⁴ According to the October 19, 2011, Bowdoin Student Government minutes, the athletics department purchased yellow shirts for every athlete on Bowdoin’s teams.⁶⁵⁵

The RCSGD has hosted several major campus events, including Coming Out Week, National Coming Out Day, Proud of My Whole Self Day, and GAYpril.⁶⁵⁶

Queer Outrage

Although a large majority of Bowdoin students lean to the political left, the campus tends to be quiet on national political issues.⁶⁵⁷ That may reflect the geographic isolation of Brunswick, Maine. The largest exception to this political quiescence is gay rights and gay marriage. Advocates of traditional marriage face serious obstacles to free expression of their views at Bowdoin.

One of the “past events” listed on the “Bowdoin Queer Web” is a fall 2005 entry titled “Michael Heath Protest.”⁶⁵⁸ Michael Heath, former director of the Christian Civic League of Maine (renamed the Maine Family Policy Council), was invited to speak at Bowdoin on September 19, 2005, by the Bowdoin College Republicans.⁶⁵⁹ Heath was invited, according to Zachary Linhart (Class of 2007), former chairman of the Bowdoin College Republicans, because he was “currently the lead supporter of voting yes on Question 1 on the upcoming referendum in Maine.”⁶⁶⁰ Question 1, also known as the Maine Sexual Orientation Veto Referendum, asked: “Do you want to reject the new law that would protect people from discrimination in employment, housing, education, public accommodations and credit based on their sexual orientation?”⁶⁶¹

The *Orient* reported that several hundred protesters filed in to the speech, each wearing a yellow shirt as a sign of solidarity with proponents of the gay rights movement.⁶⁶² The surge in attendance was so large that the event had to be moved to a 262-seat auditorium, and even then some of the approximately three hundred students and the “handful of administrators” were

⁶⁵⁴“Second Annual Yellow Shirt Day Supports Bowdoin’s LGBTIQ Community,” *Campus News*, October 21, 2011, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1bowdoincampus/008942.shtml>.

⁶⁵⁵Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, Bowdoin College, October 19, 2011.

⁶⁵⁶“Calendar of Events: Past Events,” Bowdoin College, Bowdoin Queer Web, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/queer/calendar/past-events.shtml>.

⁶⁵⁷An October 2008 *Bowdoin Orient* poll taken of 872 responding students determined that 84.3 percent intended to vote for Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election, 11.0 percent intended to vote for John McCain, 2.8 percent were undecided, and 1.8 percent intended to vote for other candidates. Adam Kommel, “Poll: 84 Percent Support Obama,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 31, 2008, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3852>.

⁶⁵⁸“Calendar of Events: Past Events,” Bowdoin College, Bowdoin Queer Web, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/queer/calendar/past-events.shtml>.

⁶⁵⁹Zachary Linhart, “Bowdoin’s Liberal Students Are Disrespectful Once Again,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 23, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1125>.

⁶⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶⁶¹“People’s Vetoes 1909 -,” compiled by the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library, updated December 19, 2011, <http://www.state.me.us/legis/lawlib/peoplesveto.htm>.

⁶⁶²Bobby Guerette and Anne Riley, “Yellow-Clad Protestors Unite for Rights,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 23, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1117>.

forced to sit in the aisles.⁶⁶³ Michael Heath began his speech by appealing to the student's sense of open-mindedness:

You are open-minded, idealistic, and seeking answers to life's hard questions. . . . Tonight you will hear ideas you haven't heard before; and it is unlikely that you would hear them at any other college campus. But the essence of a liberal arts education is openness to new ideas. All I ask is that you listen to what I have to say with an open mind.⁶⁶⁴

Nevertheless, according to the *Orient*, Heath's appeal did not have a lasting effect: "The audience remained mostly silent while Heath gave his speech and started the question-and-answer session," when "things started to heat up."⁶⁶⁵

"For the questioning, Heath was joined by Pastor Sandy Williams of the First Baptist Church of Freeport, Maine. Williams is also the chairman of the Coalition for Marriage," the *Orient* reported.⁶⁶⁶ Williams said that he did not believe that there was a massive amount of discrimination in Maine towards gays. This comment elicited an eruption of "jeers and cries from the audience." The tension rose when Alexander Linhart (Class of 2006), Bowdoin College Republicans chairman, shouted to the protesters, "We'll throw you out of here!"

Heath tried to calm the crowd—"Bowdoin is better than this"—and urged them against "choosing not to be civil to this man [Williams]—a man of the cloth." Margaret Fuller (Class of 2006) rebuked Heath and Williams: "That's not a very Christian message." She continued, "What you're doing is setting a bad example for the church and turning people away from the church." Fuller demanded that Heath and Williams show her "the verse that says we should be intolerant." Another student rushed forward with a Bible in her hand, "I brought one." As she moved toward the podium the protesters cheered her forward. Heath closed the question and answer with a prayer, which prompted a number of students to rise and leave.⁶⁶⁷

On September 23, 2005, the *Orient* printed numerous letters from students under titles such as "Yellow-Clad Protestors Unite for Rights," "Heath Is Close-Minded and Unaccepting," "Heath Poorly Represented Christianity," "Heath Doesn't Preach True Christianity," "Bowdoin's Liberal Students Are Disrespectful Once Again," and "Yellow Showed Students Care about Queers."

Ben Freedman (Class of 2009) wrote that "Throughout his talk, all that I could think about was how haughty and conceited he acted with his constant references to Christianity and

⁶⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁶⁴Michael Heath, "The Vision Place of Souls," transcript of speech, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME, September 19, 2005, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TrhWKdCylLXvdGdwSbhJqAOscP_fQ6yY7Eun675wA-/edit.

⁶⁶⁵Guerette and Riley, "Yellow-Clad Protestors."

⁶⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁶⁷Ibid.

western [*sic*] civilization.”⁶⁶⁸ Charlotte Carnevale (Class of 2006) chastised Heath for defending Williams as a “man of the cloth” and sought to offer a better Christianity: “[H]e was not preaching about the Christ I know...Bowdoin, I’m telling you right now: the Christianity I know is not a creed of discrimination or hate, but one of love for all people, regardless of who they are.”⁶⁶⁹ Margaret Fuller, who had rebuked Heath and Williams at the talk, continued her condemnation: “It offends me as both a Christian and a human being...The fact that Heath prayed at the end in Jesus’s name makes me cringe because in doing so he was invoking someone clearly at odds with his twisted and misguided view.”⁶⁷⁰ Steve Kolowich (Class of 2008) criticized Heath’s argument, but was critical of his fellow students as well, one of whom, Kolowich recounted to his chagrin, had asked Heath, “Do you think gays are human beings?”⁶⁷¹ In an *Orient* op-ed, Matt Wieler (Class of 2007) sought to encourage his fellow students to behave better by imploring them to be unlike Heath, whom he accused of “bigotry,” calling him “despicable,” “condescending,” and “hateful and unconvincing.” Wieler attributed to Heath the belief that “anyone who disagrees with him is going to hell,” and ended by advising his fellow students to be “all the things Michael Heath is not.”⁶⁷²

Four years later, on October 30, 2009, Robert Gagnon, a theologian from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary invited to speak at Bowdoin by its Intersity chapter, met similar treatment.⁶⁷³ After his presentation on the Bible and homosexual practice, intended for the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship but open to the campus, Gagnon published an article on his website describing the event: “Back to the Oppressive Future: Homosexualist Attempts at Suppressing Rational Debate at Bowdoin College and the Maine ‘Gay Marriage’ Referendum.”⁶⁷⁴

Like Heath and Williams before him, Gagnon arrived at Bowdoin amidst a time of political controversy. Gay marriage was going to be on the ballot only four days later: Question 1, “Do you want to reject the new law that lets same-sex couples marry and allows individuals and religious groups to refuse to perform these marriages?”⁶⁷⁵ In his presentation Gagnon drew

⁶⁶⁸Ben Friedman, “Heath Is Close-Minded and Unaccepting,” *Bowdoin Orient*, letter to the editor, September 23, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1131>.

⁶⁶⁹Charlotte Carnevale, “Heath Poorly Represented Christianity,” *Bowdoin Orient*, letter to the editor, September 23, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1127>.

⁶⁷⁰Margaret Fuller, “Heath Doesn’t Preach True Christianity,” *Bowdoin Orient*, letter to the editor, September 23, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1121>.

⁶⁷¹Steve Kolowich, “Speaker and Students Disappoint,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 23, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1122>.

⁶⁷²Matt Wieler, “Persuasion Should Be Poised,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 23, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1126>.

⁶⁷³Robert A. J. Gagnon, Ph.D., “Back to the Oppressive Future: Homosexualist Attempts at Suppressing Rational Debate at Bowdoin College and the Maine ‘Gay Marriage’ Referendum,” Dr. Robert A. J. Gagnon, November 3, 2009, <http://robgagnon.net/homosexBowdoinCollege.htm>.

⁶⁷⁴*Ibid.* The *Orient* did not report on the presentation. We tried to contact Allen Delong, director of student life, a significant figure in Gagnon’s account, by email on March 23, June 12, and July 23, 2012. He declined to respond. We also spoke with several students who were in attendance. But as Gagnon’s is the only written record, we have been forced to rely almost exclusively on his account of the event.

⁶⁷⁵“People’s Veto of Bill to Allow Same-Sex Marriage Certified by Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap for November Ballot,” Maine.gov, September 2, 2009, <http://www.maine.gov/sos/news/2009/certified-peoples-veto.htm>.

traditional conclusions from the Bible about homosexuality that did not sit well with some audience members. Gagnon reported that the event drew approximately 150 attendees, including several administrators and a large group of students wearing yellow shirts that read “Gay? Fine By Me.” The administrators included Allen DeLong, director of student life and a self-described gay father, host of a monthly dinner, “Men Who Date Men,” and member of Q&A (Queers and Allies).⁶⁷⁶

Gagnon cited Augustine’s maxim, “Love not in the person his error, but the person; for the person God made, the error the person himself made.” He interpreted Mark 10, Matthew 19, Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, and Leviticus 18:6. He then spoke about Jesus Christ’s “loving outreach to the biggest violators of God’s ethical demands” and focused on the meaning of the parable of the prodigal son. Gagnon recounted: “The talk lasted about an hour-and-a-half. The Q&A time that followed lasted about 45 minutes.”⁶⁷⁷ Gagnon described his audience’s reaction:

The questions/comments were almost entirely from the aggressive “GLBT” side of the audience. I think the evangelical Christians were, for the most part, too intimidated to say anything. Throughout my presentation and responses in Q&A there were many from the “GLBT” contingent who behaved rudely: eye-rolling, turning to talk to others while I was speaking, some abortive attempts at ridicule. I think that matters would have been much worse had I shown that I was susceptible to their intimidation or responded in an unintelligent fashion. To be sure, there were other students who acted respectfully. Some attempted to lecture me about the historical and literary context of certain texts, although that stopped when in my responses I was able to show how they had misconstrued that context. There was not a single question or comment the entire evening that posed any problem for what I had presented.

However, that made the Director of Student Life, Allen DeLong, mad. Instead of setting an example for students as regards rational argumentation and civil discourse, DeLong launched into an *ad hominem* tirade. In a blustery manner he said words to the effect of the following: “This really isn’t a question for Dr. Gagnon or about Dr. Gagnon but a statement to the Intervarsity staff [an advisory organization to the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship]. What does it say about the character of the Intervarsity staff to bring this *wolf-in-sheep’s-clothing* here?” DeLong went on to rail against me for comparing homosexual unions to incest and polyamory and to intimate that the Student Association Handbook had been violated by having me come speak. I took his comments to the Intervarsity staff as an implicit threat that the latter would be made to recant my teaching.⁶⁷⁸ (emphasis in original)

⁶⁷⁶Gagnon, “Back to the Oppressive Future.”

⁶⁷⁷Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸Ibid.

Delong declined to speak with us, and we are unsure whether there were any consequences for his actions. He remains director of student life.

In September 2011, controversy encircled the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship once again. Sandy Williams, who had spoken with Heath to the Bowdoin College Republicans in 2005, was asked to preside over the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship September 18, 2011, chapel service. Two students walked out in protest, according to the *Orient*, because they thought his sermon was “homophobic.”⁶⁷⁹

Williams’s topic, the “wrath of God,” was based on the Book of Romans 1:18–32. Here are the verses (26 and 27) from this passage that sparked the controversy:

For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. (English Standard Version)

According to several witnesses, Williams’s sermon only briefly touched on these verses; he was more largely concerned with immoral behavior in general. Kate Herman (Class of 2015), one of the two students who left in protest, told the *Orient*, “[Williams] started preaching his beliefs, I believe it was within one or two minutes that we decided to walk out.” She continued: “I felt that by remaining there, we were somehow accepting what he was saying, and I felt the need to leave.”⁶⁸⁰ Herman also sent an email to the entire Bowdoin Christian Fellowship voicing her displeasure and wondering why someone “would be invited to voice those sentiments in the middle of what I understood to be an open and supportive campus.”⁶⁸¹ Amanda Gartside (Class of 2012), a leader of the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship, responded to Herman’s comment by offering a competing vision of the college’s appropriate intellectual mission: “As a school, I think we are all here to explore the truth and we value intellectual freedom.” Gartside wrote, “I think that religion plays an important role in that. We’re not saying that you have to agree with us.”⁶⁸²

Herman and fellow walk-out Cordelia Miller (Class of 2015) also registered their anger with Leana Amaez, associate dean of multicultural student programs. Dean Amaez responded to the student complaints by refusing to pay Williams the honorarium customarily given to Bowdoin Christian Fellowship guest preachers by the Office of Multicultural Student Programs. Amaez told the *Orient*:

⁶⁷⁹Melissa Wiley, “BCF Chapel Service Sparks Controversy, Leads to Withdrawal of Funds,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 23, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6592>.

⁶⁸⁰Ibid.

⁶⁸¹Ibid.

⁶⁸²Ibid.

Because the mission of my office is that students feel comfortable and included at Bowdoin no matter what their race, religion, class, sexuality, or gender may be, I will not fund things where students feel as if that aspect of their humanity is not being included or appreciated.⁶⁸³

She added:

I want to be absolutely clear that I absolutely support [the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship] to give whatever message they feel is the right one for their faith; that said, there is a difference between your right to say anything and the College's need to fund it.⁶⁸⁴

A week later, on September 30, 2011, the *Orient* reported that the Office of Multicultural Student Programs had chosen to “withdraw funding from chapel services hosted by Bowdoin Christian Fellowship.”⁶⁸⁵

On October 21, 2011, Timothy Foster, dean of student affairs, explained that the controversy was a catalyst that caused the Office of Multicultural Student Programs to review its practice of paying preachers for the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship.⁶⁸⁶ Upon review, it became apparent to Dean Amaez that such payments were highly irregular and against the office's normal financial procedures. According to Foster, “With the long-term in mind, Dean Amaez encouraged the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship to approach the [Student Activities Funding Committee]” for financial assistance.⁶⁸⁷ Micah Ludwig (Class of 2013), a leader of the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship, corroborated Dean Foster's account.⁶⁸⁸

A Pro-Gay Marriage Administration

Bowdoin's advancement of “queer” politics goes right to the top. On October 25, 2012, President Mills published his “Now's the Time to Stand up for Civil Rights and Freedoms in Maine: Vote ‘Yes’ on Question 1” in the *Orient*.⁶⁸⁹ Question 1 on the Maine State ballot read:

Do you want to allow the State of Maine to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples?⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸³Ibid.

⁶⁸⁴Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵Melissa Wiley, “Office of Multicultural Programs Withdraws Sermon Funds,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 30, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6623>.

⁶⁸⁶Tim Foster, “BCF Controversy Was Catalyst for Decision to Retract Funding,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 21, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6677>.

⁶⁸⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸⁸Micah Ludwig, email message to Michael Toscano, March 20, 2012.

⁶⁸⁹Barry Mills, “Now's the Time to Stand Up for Civil Rights and Freedoms in Maine: Vote ‘Yes’ on Question 1,” *Bowdoin Orient*, letter to the editor, October 25, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7583>.

⁶⁹⁰“Maine Same-Sex Marriage Question, Question 1 (2012),” Ballotpedia, http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Maine_Same-Sex_Marriage_Question,_Question_1_%282012%29.

Mills wrote:

In Maine, we will... cast our votes on a referendum that, in my view, focuses on important issues of equality and fairness. I will vote yes on “Question 1” because I believe our democracy must protect the rights of all citizens, regardless of age, race, creed, religion, marital status, national origin, or, in this case, sexual orientation.⁶⁹¹

Mills assured *Orient* readers that he was not speaking as the president of Bowdoin College: “I set forth my views as a private citizen and a resident of Brunswick, Maine”—adding, “I hope you will join me in affirming American and Maine values of fairness and equality by voting ‘yes’ on ‘Question 1.’”⁶⁹²

Fraught Tranquility

The British poet Philip Larkin’s sardonic observation that “Sexual Intercourse began / in nineteen sixty-three,” took notice that the sexual revolution had transformed sex “from a sort of bargaining” to a “quite unlosable game,” seemingly free of consequences.⁶⁹³ In fact, that not-so-long-ago sexual revolution ushered in many new complications with which student culture at Bowdoin today is fraught. We have examined Bowdoin’s determination to eliminate masculine pronouns and other references to men in historical documents from the era in which it was an all-male college, and Bowdoin’s decision to close its fraternity system on the grounds that they sustained “informal patterns” of male privilege and were “institutional symbols” of an old order. We have reviewed the use of New Student Orientation to enunciate the theme that Bowdoin students should engage in whatever forms of sexual behavior they choose—provided that they first obtain the “consent” of their partners. And we have discussed how this doctrine of “consent” is linked to a fictitious sense that female students at Bowdoin are at high risk of sexual assault. But the hookup culture and general promiscuity among Bowdoin students is real.

In many respects, Bowdoin does more than condone the sexual freedom of its students. It actively encourages student sexual activity and facilitates it. Bowdoin’s “Consent Is Sexy” week is an official event, and the college ensures that condoms and other contraceptives are freely available. But the sexual culture of Bowdoin is also a matter of student initiative. The large degree of license means that at one level sexuality among Bowdoin students has little of its traditional emotional fraughtness. It is not a domain of behavior set apart from ordinary transactions, but has been reduced for many students to part of the give and take of everyday existence. Sexuality at Bowdoin has been fit into the general rubric of self-exploration that dominates other aspects of Bowdoin life. Sexual behavior doesn’t seem especially consequential to students, provided that they abide by the “consent” code.

⁶⁹¹Mills, “Now’s the Time to Stand Up.”

⁶⁹²Ibid.

⁶⁹³Philip Larkin, “Annus Mirabilis,” *Collected Poems* (London: Marvell Press, 1988), 167.

This pattern is not one in which sexual relations are notably joyful. Sexual freedom at Bowdoin results in sex that is frequent but often impersonal, mechanistic, acquisitive, and accompanied by consumption of large amounts of alcohol. It leads less and less to enduring attachments among partners, as shown by the historical decline in the numbers of Bowdoin students who end up marrying one another.

The inconsequential quality of sexual behavior for Bowdoin students, however, is accurate only on a relatively superficial level. Bowdoin students have not really achieved tranquility with their sexual passions. Rather they appear to have anaesthetized themselves to deeper yearnings, which nonetheless return. One study, for example, reports that 66 percent of Bowdoin men and 61 percent of Bowdoin women “want to be in relationship”—“relationship” on a campus dominated by a hookup culture is fragile and evanescent.⁶⁹⁴

Sexual freedom at Bowdoin is fraught in other ways as well. The disappearance of sexual norms and social taboos against promiscuity left unresolved large questions about masculinity, femininity, and same-sex attraction. In the long aftermath of the sexual revolution these questions have proved difficult to settle and fertile ground for ideological assertion. At Bowdoin, traditional forms of masculinity are often treated as suspect, while assertions of various feminist versions of female identity are actively encouraged. Same-sex attraction has likewise emerged as an area of prideful and confident assertion of identity.

These two areas of assertion, represented by institutional arrangements such as the Women’s Resource Center and the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity, come with their own dynamic of fragility and stridency. Both conjure images of people at grave risk of psychological mistreatment and social ostracism and insist on the need for affirmation of their identities by the community at large. But because the Bowdoin community already affirms their identities, they are often left in the position of searching for evidence of an underlying hostility that just doesn’t exist. “Queerness,” in the sense of transgressive or rebellious sexuality, is an especially difficult stance to maintain at a college that is pretty much indifferent to any form of sexual expression that involves consenting partners. The abundance of visual and verbal sexual vulgarity and pornographic expression at Bowdoin testifies to this enervation. Those who feel the need to defy community norms to achieve a sexual frisson are left at Bowdoin in a wilderness of toleration where the only thing left to seek is an ever greater level of acclaim. This is what Anything But Straight in Athletics and Yellow Shirt Day are intended to offer.

What Larkin called the “unlosable game” turns out to be losable after all. Bowdoin students are offered license to explore their sexuality ad nauseam, but they are offered no path at all to sexual self-control, maturity, or the formation of stable and fulfilling complementary relationships.

⁶⁹⁴Fariha Mahmud and Alana Wooley, “Are Men Really Commitment-Phobic?” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 15, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/928>.

II. Student Housing and Dining

Bowdoin has eight freshman (“first-year”) residence halls known as “bricks”: Appleton Hall, Coleman Hall, Hyde Hall, Maine Hall, Moore Hall, Osher Hall, West Hall, and Winthrop Hall. It has eight upperclass residences known as “social houses”: Baxter House, Burnett House, Helmreich House, Howell House, Ladd House, MacMillan House, Quinby House, and Reed House. Bowdoin also has six upperclass residence halls: Chamberlain Hall, Coles Tower, Howard Hall, Smith House, Stowe Inn, and Stowe Hall. And the college has five upperclass apartments: Brunswick Apartments, Cleaveland St. Apartments, Harpswell Apartments, Mayflower Apartments, and Pine St. Apartments.⁶⁹⁵

Bowdoin’s first-year students live in the eight first-year residence halls, in fulfillment of a college requirement that they live on campus.⁶⁹⁶ Sophomores are also required to live on campus, but not in the bricks. First-year students are assigned housing “based on information requested prior to enrollment.”⁶⁹⁷ According to the Bowdoin website, each of the first-year bricks (and the students assigned to them) is associated with one of the social houses as a nominal “member.” A first-year, however, does not have to become a resident in the associated social house as a sophomore.

The connection between the “bricks” and the “social houses” is conceptualized by Bowdoin as part of a plan for integrating students. According to a virtual tour of Bowdoin on its website, it is part of “an all-inclusive program where everyone feels a part of a club right from the start.”⁶⁹⁸ After their first year, students can be chosen as residents of social houses “with input from faculty, deans, students, and staff,” where they work to foster community among their assigned first-years and the campus in general. Social house residents “help bring students together around organized events such as dinners at the house, professor lectures, ice cream socials and dance parties.”⁶⁹⁹ Social houses are therefore places of residence for upperclass students (mostly sophomores) and centers of campus community.

Each spring, upperclass students participate in a housing lottery to determine the order in which they can choose their residence.⁷⁰⁰ In 2011–2012, according to the Common Data Set, 8 percent of Bowdoin’s upperclass students did not live “in college-owned, -operated, or -affiliated housing.”⁷⁰¹ They either were studying abroad or had chosen to live in a non-Bowdoin-owned apartment.

⁶⁹⁵“Housing Options,” Bowdoin College, Residential Life, Housing, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/reslife/housing/housing-options.shtml>.

⁶⁹⁶“Residential Life Policies,” Bowdoin College, Residential Life, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/reslife/>.

⁶⁹⁷Ibid.

⁶⁹⁸“First Year Residences,” Bowdoin College, About Tour, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/about/campus/tour/first-year-residences/index.shtml>.

⁶⁹⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰⁰“Housing Lottery,” Bowdoin College, Residential Life, Housing, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/reslife/housing/lottery.shtml>.

⁷⁰¹“Common Data Set 2011–2012,” Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, Facts & Figures, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/images/cds2011-12.pdf>.

The “New Student Housing Preference Form” indicates that “all dorms are coed. All rooms are single sex.”⁷⁰² In fact, that claim about single-sex rooms is not entirely true.

Bowdoin’s “bricks” are coed by floor. The bathrooms in the bricks, however, are single-sex.⁷⁰³ Even so, for the most part, student rooms are divided by sex. In February 2010, Bowdoin introduced the option of “gender-neutral housing,” a policy that caters to the college’s “queer” students. Bowdoin’s new policy was enacted in response to a fall 2009 petition from a group of students, including George Aumoithe and Isa Abney (the editors of *Q*), who argued that “mandatory same-sex housing was biased against gay and transgender students.”⁷⁰⁴

The *Orient* reported that “Bowdoin continues to place restrictions on gender-neutral housing. One-room triples remain restricted to students of the same gender, and students taking part in the quads lottery must maintain a 2/2 gender ratio.” And “all first year students live with students of the same sex, regardless of their preference.”⁷⁰⁵

Residential life at Bowdoin is a matter of considerable amenity. For some students, however, it is also a point of ideological and personal conflict. In this way, the students mirror the college administration, which seeks to satisfy the longings of students for comfort, while simultaneously attempting to dissuade them from their tendencies toward bias and “self-selection.”

In 1997, as discussed earlier, Bowdoin received a report from its Commission on Residential Life, “Building Community at Bowdoin College,” recommending that the fraternities be closed. Bowdoin accepted the report and the fraternities were phased out between 1997 and 1999. Referring to this watershed, President Mills remarked at a faculty meeting on November 3, 2003, “The house system is clearly very important to the college. And the document that created the house system was in certain ways very political.”⁷⁰⁶

As we have already seen, even though—in a Commission on Residential Life poll regarding whether Bowdoin’s fraternities should be maintained, altered, or abolished—fraternities received the support of 82 percent of the student body, Bowdoin closed them on the grounds that “many students of color, gay and lesbian students, and some women” found “Bowdoin a difficult place in which to feel welcome and at home.”⁷⁰⁷ In lieu of the fraternities the Commission on Residential Life proposed a “new, more inclusive College House system.”⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰²“New Student Housing Preference Form,” Bowdoin College, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/transfer-student-resources/pdf/2009-10/fy-housing-preference-2009-10.pdf>.

⁷⁰³“First Year Residences.”

⁷⁰⁴ Frizell, “Queer at Bowdoin.”

⁷⁰⁵Ibid.

⁷⁰⁶Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, November 3, 2003, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁷⁰⁷“Building Community at Bowdoin College: An Interim Report of the Commission on Residential Life to the Board of Trustees of Bowdoin College,” February 22, 1997, 5.

⁷⁰⁸Ibid., 21.

The system the commission envisioned is now in place. “Values of a Learning Community,” Bowdoin’s official “philosophy for residential life,” first published in “Building Community at Bowdoin College,” describes the “inclusive community” in ideal:

A residential community brings together people of varying experiences, values, beliefs, and interests in the recognition that much learning and personal growth come through the creative friction created in contact with difference.⁷⁰⁹

We have examined in the section on “Key Concepts” the special importance attached to the concept of “difference” at Bowdoin. “Inclusive community” is a term best understood as a coordinate idea. What is included in “inclusive” is positively valued “difference.”

“Building Community at Bowdoin College” presented additional concerns. Mills told the faculty, “We can see [the report] as part of a larger project, one we are always engaged in, to enhance the intellectual life of the college.”⁷¹⁰ The Committee on Residential Life had identified fraternities as the primary cause of a “separation of social and academic life”:

The separation of academic and campus life is difficult to document but, nonetheless, real. Students distinguish “academics” from the rest of their experience at Bowdoin and describe the College as a place where students “work hard and play hard.” Some students report disappointment that lively intellectual engagement diminishes after the first year.⁷¹¹

The report also criticized the fraternities for engendering a “weak sense of community”:

There are many pressures toward fragmentation and away from a sense of College community. Students move from one residence to the next over four years at Bowdoin with little continuity in relationships with diverse groups of students.⁷¹²

“Particularly traumatic,” according to the commission, was the fraternity rush, which “turns the attention of about one-third of first-year students from their room-, dorm-, and classmates to their fraternity mates.”⁷¹³

The commission pinpointed what it felt was another source of the “fragmentation” of social and academic life at Bowdoin: student dining. The commission reported that “dining capacity falls short of the expanded number of students,” many of whom relied on “two central College dining halls and seven fraternity dining halls.” It added: “Dining has its strongest connection to residence in fraternities, but that link is necessarily attenuated in central College

⁷⁰⁹Ibid., 14.

⁷¹⁰Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, November 3, 2003, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁷¹¹“Building Community at Bowdoin,” 4.

⁷¹²Ibid., 5.

⁷¹³Ibid.

dining halls. All of these factors reinforce fragmentation.”⁷¹⁴ The commission looked forward to an inclusive dining structure: “We envision that students will generally eat their meals at a central College dining facility.”⁷¹⁵

These (and other) problems led the commission to recommend the closure of fraternities and the establishment of Bowdoin’s new social house system, one designed to embody the “Values of a Learning Community.” The fraternity houses themselves, purchased by the college, became the “social houses” imbued with the new ethos of an “all inclusive program.”⁷¹⁶

Closing the fraternities therefore became a step in the reorganization of student dining. In April 2008, Michael S. Sanders, a food critic writing for the *New York Times*, described Bowdoin’s menu: “If it weren’t for the trays, and the fact that most diners are under 25, you’d think it was a restaurant. But this is Thorne dining hall at Bowdoin College.”⁷¹⁷ In 2012, the *Princeton Review* ranked Bowdoin’s campus food as the best in the country.⁷¹⁸ The menus for both of Bowdoin’s major dining halls—Thorne Hall and Moulton Union—feature a wide variety of offerings, including vegan, vegetarian, and gluten-free options.⁷¹⁹

Bowdoin also has a variety of meal plans. For instance, all first-year students are obligated to use a nineteen-meal-a-week plan,⁷²⁰ at a cost of \$6,390.⁷²¹ Smith Union is home to Jack Magee’s Pub (beer, wine, and bar food), Bowdoin Express (a convenience store), and the Cafe.⁷²² Thorne Hall also offers Super Snacks, a late-hour dining service—10:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.—on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Students were relieved to learn in October 2010 that Super Snacks was going to remain open, even though Dining Services considered closing the service because of frequent drunken behavior; according to the *Orient*, “several students were found vomiting at Thorne Hall on Saturday, September 25.”⁷²³

The commission declared in “Building Community at Bowdoin College” that its members “began their work with no presuppositions.”⁷²⁴ This understates the situation. The commission started in the shadow of a campus tragedy that had eventuated in calls to reform the fraternity system. On March 15, 1996, Cameron Brett, a visiting student, fell to his death while

⁷¹⁴Ibid.

⁷¹⁵Ibid, 17.

⁷¹⁶“First Year Residences.”

⁷¹⁷Michael S. Sanders, “Latest College Reading Lists: Menus with Pho and Lobster,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/09/dining/09campus.html?_r=2&ref=dining&oref=slogin&.

⁷¹⁸“Bowdoin College,” The Princeton Review, <http://www.princetonreview.com/bowdoincollege.aspx>.

⁷¹⁹“Board Plan Standards 2012–2013,” Bowdoin College, Dining, What, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/dining/what/board-plan-standards.shtml>.

⁷²⁰“Board Plans & Policies,” Bowdoin College, Dining, What, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/dining/what/board-plan-and-policies.shtml>.

⁷²¹“Common Data Set 2011–2002,” Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, Facts & Figures, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/images/cds2011-12.pdf>.

⁷²²“Hours and Locations,” Bowdoin College, Dining, When and Where, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/dining/when-where/index.shtml#5>.

⁷²³Peter Davis, “In Spite of Transports, Super Snack Remains,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 22, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5675>.

⁷²⁴“Building Community at Bowdoin,” 2.

attending a fraternity house party.⁷²⁵ On April 8, 1996, President Edwards told the faculty that “The fraternities now seem counter to the College’s purposes.”⁷²⁶ On May 6, 1996, Edwards announced to the faculty that he would initiate “a faculty study to consider the long-term implications for the campus of the elimination of fraternities.”⁷²⁷ On May 20, 1996, the faculty minutes report that Edwards had “expressed his own belief that the price the College pays to retain fraternities is a ‘culture of deceit and dissembling.’”⁷²⁸ On May 23, 1996, Edwards told the governing boards, “Bowdoin is now paying a far higher price for fraternities than it or its students are receiving in educational value.”⁷²⁹ The commission, therefore, was clearly working under pressure from a college president who had already publicly declared his desire to rid Bowdoin of its fraternity system.

On March 3, 1997, President Edwards reported that the trustees had unanimously approved the report of the Commission on Residential Life, and described it as a “major change that would set the college on a correct course for the future.”⁷³⁰ Professor William Watterson, however, noted that “student morale is low and that, with the phasing out of fraternities, it may get even worse if fraternity members become alienated.”⁷³¹

This decision appeared not to be especially popular with alumni. At the November 3, 1997, faculty meeting it was announced that the “alumni participation rate for annual giving” had dropped by 50 percent.⁷³²

III. Drinking and Partying

“Bowdoin Beata”

Drinking has a long history at Bowdoin College. When President Sills’s “Rise, Sons of Bowdoin” became the college’s alma mater in 1952, it replaced an old drinking song, “Bowdoin Beata” (“blessed Bowdoin”), composed by Henry Hill Pierce (Class of 1896).⁷³³ “Rise, Sons of

⁷²⁵Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, March 15, 1996, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁷²⁶Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, April 8, 1996, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁷²⁷Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 6, 1996, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁷²⁸Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 20, 1996, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁷²⁹Joshua Miller, “Taking a Look Back at the Commission on Residential Life,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 12, 2007, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/2903>.

⁷³⁰Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, March 3, 1997, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁷³¹Ibid.

⁷³²Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, November 3, 1997, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁷³³“Henry Hill Pierce,” Bowdoin College Library, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, College Archives, Honorary Degree Recipients, 1918–, <http://library.bowdoin.edu/arch/subject/bowdoin/honors/pierce26.pdf>.

Bowdoin” was substituted as a more dignified—and drier—alternative.⁷³⁴ In the early 1990s, the aforementioned Professor Anthony Antolini (Class of 1963) adapted “Bowdoin Beata” by removing references to men in its lyrics—specifically the words “sons” and “manhood”—just as he had done to the lyrics of “Rise, Sons of Bowdoin.”⁷³⁵ Antolini told the *Orient* in 2009: “When I was a student I sang in the Meddies and the all-male Glee Club, and we sang [“Bowdoin Beata”] all the time. Fraternity pledges were also required to learn it by heart.”⁷³⁶ Despite long tradition, the song was banned by the college in subsequent years because it was a drinking song. When Antolini returned to Bowdoin as a faculty member in 1992, he tried to revive “Bowdoin Beata” by removing words such as “men” and “sons,” but left it in the form of an alcoholic toast:

When bright skies were o’er us,
and life lay before us,
‘Neath Bowdoin’s pines we gathered far and near.
So filling our glasses,
and ~~pledging~~ *greeting* all classes,
we drink a health to alma mater dear.

So it’s clink, clink, drink, drink, drink!
Smash the glass ~~in~~ *to* splinters when you’re done.
O Bowdoin Beata, our dear alma mater,
there is no fairer mother ’neath the sun.

When ~~manhood~~ *gray hair* has ~~found~~ *crowned* us,
and children surround us,
Our college days and friends we’ll still recall.
With heartfelt emotion
and deathless devotion,
we’ll ~~send our sons to~~ *meet again at* Bowdoin in the fall.

Chorus
When age, gray and hoary,
~~has filled our story,~~
~~the tender mem’ries back again,~~
~~loyal forever,~~
~~until death shall sever,~~
~~one glass to alma mater we shall drain.~~
Chorus⁷³⁷

⁷³⁴John Clair Minot and Donald Francis Snow, eds., *Tales of Bowdoin: Some Gathered Fragments and Fancies of Undergraduate Life in the Past and Present* (Augusta, ME: Press of Kennebec Journal, 1901), 377.

⁷³⁵Linda Kinstler, “Choral Concert to Enliven Homecoming Weekend,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 16, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4605>.

⁷³⁶*Ibid.*

⁷³⁷Henry Hill Pierce, “Bowdoin Beata,” lyrics adapted by Anthony Antolini, <http://alumni.bowdoin.edu/netcommunity/document.doc?id=133>. Minot and Snow, *Tales of Bowdoin*, 377.

But Antolini's revised "Bowdoin Beata" failed to catch on and is rarely sung at Bowdoin's ceremonial events. The Bowdoin Chorus finally performed it in 2009.⁷³⁸ Pierce's original "Bowdoin Beata," however, is a favorite of the Meddiebempsters, Bowdoin's oldest all-male *cappella* group, founded in 1937, who refuse to sing Antolini's lyrics.⁷³⁹

Alcohol Surveys

Drinking remains a common and prominent part of social life at Bowdoin today, though it is somewhat sub rosa. Over the years, the college's administrations have expressed hope that various measures might curtail it. In 1968, the "Annual Report of the Student Life Committee" argued that coeducation would lessen the attractions of excess alcohol consumption:

The absence of women on campus at present is probably the chief contributor to the "stud image" undergraduates often have of themselves. In an all male society, men often feel the need to prove their manliness. Among college men this "proof" often takes the form of talk and action which emphasizes hard drinking, sexual potency, and social aggressiveness.... The presence of women would probably do a great deal to eradicate this lifestyle.⁷⁴⁰

But coeducation has had marginal influence on drinking. Large numbers of students of both sexes still drink in excess, and excess drinking has found a new function in lowering whatever inhibitions remain for students engaged in hooking up. As noted earlier, the 2003–2004 study carried out by students in "Research and Social Activism"—Kristen Ghodsee's Gender and Women's Studies 301 course—adopted the vernacular to report that:

Twenty-seven percent [of respondents] said they "hook up" only while sober, 21 percent are normally "a little tipsy," 28 percent are "heavily buzzed," 18 percent are "pretty trashed," and six percent are "totally wasted."⁷⁴¹

In 2008–2009, the *Orient's* poll on dating and relationships found that "Seventy-five percent of students that have hooked up at Bowdoin reported that alcohol at least sometimes significantly influenced their decision."⁷⁴² Bowdoin's spring 2009 Health and Wellness Survey found that 67 percent of Bowdoin's sexually active students had sex while intoxicated.⁷⁴³ Dean of student affairs Timothy Foster was troubled, according to the *Orient*, by "the number of students who

⁷³⁸Kinstler, "Choral Concert to Enliven Homecoming."

⁷³⁹Ibid.

⁷⁴⁰"The Annual Report of the Student Life Committee 1968 (Excerpt: Coordinate Colleges)," 16, *Forty Years: The History of Women at Bowdoin*, a Class Project of GWS 280–Fall 2011, <http://research.bowdoin.edu/forty-years-the-history-of-women-at-bowdoin/prehistory-of-coeducation/annual-report-of-the-student-life-committee/>.

⁷⁴¹Alison L. McConnell, "Class Releases 'Hookup' and Drug Use Stats," *Bowdoin Orient*, April 23, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/view/104>.

⁷⁴²Emily Guerin and Mary Helen Miller, "Hung Up on Hook-Ups," *Bowdoin Orient*, December 12, 2008, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4016>.

⁷⁴³Nora Biette-Timmons, "Health Survey Shows Drink and Sleep Binging," *Bowdoin Orient*, October 29, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5717>.

have sex when drunk.”⁷⁴⁴ Rather than “eradicating” drinking, as the Student Life Committee hoped, coeducation created a new context and incentive for it.

Dean Foster was concerned not only about the relationship between alcohol consumption and sex in student life, but also “by the amount of students who drink for the purpose of getting drunk (36 percent) and the percentage who binge drink (33 percent).”⁷⁴⁵

The consumption of *hard* alcohol on campus is against college policy for all undergraduates—even those who are of age. According to Bowdoin’s “Alcohol Policy,” the Office of Residential Life enforces this ban by requiring that all on-campus parties “at which alcohol will be served or which may draw attention to itself due to noise or other circumstances must complete a party registration form and receive signed approval.”⁷⁴⁶ Security does a “pre-party check” and checks in “periodically at approved social functions to ensure that the event is operating in accordance with the Alcohol Policy.”⁷⁴⁷ Students, however, have found many ways around Bowdoin’s hard alcohol ban. They frequently keep it in hidden flasks or drink it in their dormitories with small groups of friends, a practice called (at Bowdoin and on most campuses) “pre-gaming.”

In April 2010, associate professor of government Michael Franz released the findings of a survey his “Quantitative Analysis in Political Science” class conducted of more than 600 students, which revealed the prevalence of pre-gaming at Bowdoin:

About 60 percent of students claim that the [hard alcohol ban] has no effect on their behavior, but nearly a third of all respondents go further and claim the policy compels them to drink more heavily before attending a registered party. Less than one in 10 report that the policy has its intended effect of lowering the consumption of hard alcohol. These results are particularly prevalent among first years. Nearly 40 percent of first years surveyed online or by telephone indicated that the ban on hard alcohol pushes them to drink before heading to a registered party.⁷⁴⁸

Franz also found that “more students disapprove of the hard alcohol policy than approve of it (46 to 40 percent), and a little more than one in 10 are not sure.”⁷⁴⁹

According to Bowdoin’s spring 2006 student health survey, “36.4 percent of students binge drink—consume five or more alcoholic beverages in a sitting—at least once or twice a week.”⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁴Ibid.

⁷⁴⁵Ibid.

⁷⁴⁶“Alcohol Policy,” Bowdoin College, Office of Safety and Security, Crime Prevention/Safety, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/security/crime-prevention-personal-safety/alcohol-policy/index.shtml>.

⁷⁴⁷Ibid.

⁷⁴⁸Michael Franz, “Campus Survey Completed,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 9, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5255>.

⁷⁴⁹Ibid.

In spring 2012, the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) surveyed drug and alcohol use at nine of its eleven colleges. At Bowdoin, 1,413 students completed the survey, a response rate of 79 percent.⁷⁵¹ The *Orient* reported on the NESCAC findings on September 21, 2012:

- Forty-two percent of [Bowdoin] students said they drank occasionally, and 41 percent drank often, meaning that 17 percent of students refrain from drinking entirely.
- Nineteen percent of students responded that they have been criticized for drinking too heavily.
- Students had various explanations for why they chose to drink. 33 percent [*sic*] occasionally drank to reduce stress, and 34 percent sometimes drank because they thought it helped them flirt.⁷⁵²

Dean Foster admitted that “It certainly makes it clear that alcohol use is a part of social life on our campus and other college campuses.” But he took solace in how Bowdoin compared to its comparison group: “It was interesting to see where Bowdoin stood vis-à-vis our peers, and that would be generally middle of the pack, although there are a few areas where we stand out very positively.”⁷⁵³ One of those standout areas:

Ninety-three percent of students reported feeling that Bowdoin’s alcohol policy encourages getting help from security or other staff members, compared to only 77 percent at peer schools.⁷⁵⁴

According to Bowdoin’s 2012 Clery Report: 152 students were charged by campus security with on-campus liquor law violations in 2009, 146 students were charged in 2010, and 149 students were charged in 2011.⁷⁵⁵

Drug Use

In October 2010, the *Orient* surveyed the student body concerning drug use. It received 590 responses, approximately 34 percent of Bowdoin’s students.⁷⁵⁶ When questioned on marijuana usage:

⁷⁵⁰Beth Kowitt and Bobby Guerette, “Dean Foster: Collaboration Is Key,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 8, 2006, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1903>.

⁷⁵¹Connor Evans, “Drinking Habits Not Unusual, Survey Shows,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 21, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7426>.

⁷⁵²*Ibid.*

⁷⁵³*Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁵“Annual Clery Report 2012: Campus Crime, Fire, Alcohol and Illegal Drugs,” Bowdoin College, Office of Safety and Security, 10, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/security/crime-prevention-personal-safety/campus-crime-report/pdf/2012Campus-Crime-Alcohol-and-Illegal-Drugs-Annual-Report-20123.pdf>.

⁷⁵⁶Piper Grosswendt, “Campus Poll Reveals Mild Drug Scene,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 29, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5730>.

Thirteen percent of respondents said that they use marijuana on campus or in the Brunswick area “weekly or more,” 16 percent “every month or two,” 23 percent “once to a few times,” and 49 percent “never.” In response to a question of how often they see another student smoking or under the influence of marijuana, 55 percent of respondents indicated “weekly or more.” Twenty percent reported “every month or two,” 17 percent “once to a few times” and 8 percent “never.”⁷⁵⁷

Use of other drugs was reported to be much less frequent. Seven percent of respondents reported using prescription drugs recreationally “once to a few times.” Ten percent reported using LSD “once to a few times.” Five percent used hallucinogenic mushrooms “once to a few times.” Four percent used cocaine “once to a few times.” “One hundred percent of respondents reported ‘never’ having used methamphetamines, heroin, or crack cocaine.” Thirty-eight percent (227 of 590 respondents) used drugs in a college dorm or apartment, and 22 percent (129 respondents) used drugs in a social house.⁷⁵⁸

The *Orient*’s conclusion is made clear in its headline to the article summarizing its survey statistics: “Campus Poll Reveals Mild Drug Scene.”

According to Bowdoin’s 2012 Clery Report, 23 students were charged by campus security with on-campus drug-related violations in 2009, 19 students were charged in 2010, and 40 students were charged in 2011.⁷⁵⁹

Mild or not, it appears that Bowdoin students use more drugs the longer they are enrolled at Bowdoin. In February 2013, the *Orient* reported that, according to a poll it conducted which received 544 student responses, “drug use increases as students age.”⁷⁶⁰ For instance:

The survey results showed that the number of seniors who have smoked marijuana at least once at Bowdoin increased to 60 percent up from 46 percent during the fall semester of their sophomore year.⁷⁶¹

And:

Seventy-three percent of respondents from the Class of 2014 have smoked marijuana at least once, a large increase from 32 percent in their first semester at the College in 2010.

However, the number of drug-related violations reported in Bowdoin’s 2012 Clery Report is low. In 2009, 23 students were charged by campus security with on-campus drug-related violations; in 2010, 19 were charged; in 2011, 40 students were charged.⁷⁶²

⁷⁵⁷Ibid.

⁷⁵⁸Ibid.

⁷⁵⁹“Annual Clery Report 2012: Campus Crime, Fire, Alcohol and Illegal Drugs,” Bowdoin College, Office of Safety and Security, 11, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/security/crime-prevention-personal-safety/campus-crime-report/pdf/2012Campus-Crime-Alcohol-and-Illegal-Drugs-Annual-Report-20123.pdf>.

⁷⁶⁰Sam Miller, “Survey Shows Drug Use Increases as Students Age,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 22, 2013, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/8042>.

⁷⁶¹Ibid.

Alcohol Transports

A “transport” is what Bowdoin calls the hospitalization of an intoxicated student. Though Bowdoin has banned hard alcohol and drinking games, a significant number of students end up transported.⁷⁶³ Bowdoin is sensitive to this fact and is quick to explain that medical emergencies caused by excessive drinking at Bowdoin occur at a rate lower than many other colleges. Randy Nichols, director of safety and security, explained in October 2012 that, “Our alcohol transports are usually the lowest in the NESCAC.”⁷⁶⁴

On October 21, 2012, Dean Foster sent an email to the entire student body in which he congratulated Bowdoin students for having gone a full month without any alcohol transports:

Dear Students,

It was another weekend free of an alcohol transport. The last transport occurred over a month ago on September 16.

I really admire the way people look out for one another at Bowdoin. It is part of what defines the culture of our community, but it all starts with personal responsibility and leadership. Thank you for stepping-up yourselves and thank you for stepping-in before a friend or peer needs to head to the hospital for a medical crisis.

Best regards,

Tim Foster

Dean of Student Affairs⁷⁶⁵

Alcohol, Inclusivity, and Community

The Commission on Residential Life that recommended in 1997 that Bowdoin close its fraternities believed that the new “inclusive” residential life system would “shift the paradigm” at Bowdoin “away from one that places alcohol at the center of social life.”⁷⁶⁶ According to some students, that is not what happened. In a January 2011 *Orient* article, for example, Ben Richmond (Class of 2013) cited the administration’s closing of the fraternities “supposedly” to create “an inclusive campus environment” as the seed that has led to “alcohol as the centerpiece of campus social life.” The link, Richmond wrote, is that the “inclusive” residential system put students together “without any common uniting interest,” and

⁷⁶² “Annual Clery Report 2012: Campus Crime, Fire, Alcohol and Illegal Drugs For Students and Employees of Bowdoin College and Prospective Students and Employees.” P. 11.

⁷⁶³ “Alcohol Policy,” Bowdoin College, Office of Safety and Security, Crime Prevention/Safety, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/security/crime-prevention-personal-safety/alcohol-policy/index.shtml>.

⁷⁶⁴ Connor Evans, “Drinking Habits Not Unusual, Survey Shows,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 21, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7426>.

⁷⁶⁵ “Tim Foster Re: One Month Since Last Transport,” email message to “students_in_residence,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 21, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7575>.

⁷⁶⁶ “Building Community at Bowdoin College: An Interim Report of the Commission on Residential Life to the Board of Trustees of Bowdoin College,” February 22, 1997, 26.

[a]s a result, house residents bond around a well-known common denominator, alcohol, making it a central and integral ingredient for house life.⁷⁶⁷

The residential system, as designed by the original commission, was intended to tame alcohol use by adopting a permissive approach to beer and wine and fostering a context—“campus-wide parties”—in which alcohol could be consumed in relative safety.

“Campus-wide” meant not one big party occurring all over the campus but parties that are open to all comers. By policy, all on-campus parties must be “campus-wide.” In this sense, “campus-wide” is a practical embodiment of the goal of “inclusivity,” i.e., all are invited.

This ideal turns out to be in tension with freedom of association. Bowdoin students face hurdles to forming the “small platoons” of society based on shared ideas, enthusiasms, and interests. Such groups are naturally exclusive in the sense that they foster relations among a self-selected favored few and precisely are not “open to all.” The fraternity system, whatever its defects, was not lacking as a context for friendships to develop and flourish.

The original Commission on Residential Life was aware that fraternities performed this constructive role—but imagined that it could engineer a new set of circumstances in which community and friendship would grow in contexts more aligned with the administration’s preferences.⁷⁶⁸ It expected the new social house system would prompt students to invent appropriate traditions: “Proctors and upper class students will be encouraged to develop and sustain House traditions and to teach students about the history of the College,” and added, “We envision the possibility that over time, each of these Houses will develop a distinctive tradition and identity connecting students across class years and to the College.”⁷⁶⁹

One of the inducements to this engineered camaraderie would be the “campus-wide parties” where house leaders are required to provide snacks, register the event, and register the number of kegs with the Office of Residential Life.⁷⁷⁰ Bowdoin, however, “recognizes that there are legitimate occasions when a spontaneous gathering of individuals may occur.” In the event of spontaneity, students must contact the dean-on-call to “request permission to host a spontaneous party or social event.” All on-campus parties must be registered.⁷⁷¹

These preregistered “campus-wides” are the center of first-year life; they are permitted on Friday and Saturday evenings only, with few exceptions. Even though hard alcohol is explicitly

⁷⁶⁷Ben Richmond, “Interest-Based Housing Would Be More Inclusive than College Houses,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 21, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5941>.

⁷⁶⁸“Fraternities can give their members a strong sense of belonging, a powerful bond with other students, with alumni, and with Bowdoin itself. They can offer opportunities for cross-class relationships, for leadership and self-governance, for learning and participating in the traditions of the College, and for responsible social activity. At their best, fraternities can expand a student’s social horizon by affiliation with a larger number of diverse individuals than the student would likely have come to know without such a structure.” “Building Community at Bowdoin College,” 7–8.

⁷⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁷⁰“Alcohol Policy,” Bowdoin College, Office of Safety and Security, Crime Prevention/Safety, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/security/crime-prevention-personal-safety/alcohol-policy/index.shtml>.

⁷⁷¹Ibid.

banned from these events, as discussed, first-years quickly learn the art of pre-gaming and of hiding a flask. The registering process enables the college simultaneously to monitor alcohol intake and to ensure inclusivity.

The commission was overly optimistic about the emergence of “new traditions.” Upperclassmen generally tune out and leave underclassmen to fend for themselves. Exclusivity has reemerged in the form of off-campus parties where Bowdoin students can choose whom they want to invite. The informal status hierarchy among Bowdoin students is embodied in the coveted invitation from an upperclassman to an off-campus party.

In the meantime, members of the Bowdoin community lament the sterility of the official residential life system. On January 28, 2011, for instance, the *Orient*'s editorial board noted that the house system is populated mainly by first-years and sophomores and has failed to engineer house rites, ceremonies, and traditions:

As each cohort of residents spends only a single year in a house, new traditions are difficult to implement, maintain and nurture. There is no sense of continuity. Ask any student on campus of his favorite tradition, and he will invariably announce that it is Ivies Week [a school-sponsored week of drinking and partying]. That a week of excessive drinking is memorable is not surprising. What is depressing, though, is that Ivies is little more than a week of excessive drinking. The social houses have failed to cement any lasting traditions not centered around imbibing.⁷⁷²

The editorial board recommended that houses adopt older traditions:

[D]ecades of tradition sit right under our noses in the many fraternities that populated our campus. Why not reach out to alumni and see which customs could be adopted by social houses?⁷⁷³

On May 1, 2009, a contributor to the *Orient* complained, “Our utter lack of community tradition is a serious problem calling for a serious remedy. Without tradition, we are nothing.”⁷⁷⁴ The student, in converse with the *Orient*'s editorial board, recommended Ivies as a forum to recapture such traditions. An October 24, 2004, contributor lamented: “Be it the songs you don’t know, the frats you can’t join, or the history you never learned, Bowdoin students suffer from a dearth of tradition.”⁷⁷⁵

Dean Foster’s only solution to the problem seems to be to reassert the power of students to invent their own traditions. “The beautiful thing about the College House System,” he told an

⁷⁷²“A Foundation for Tradition,” editorial, *Bowdoin Orient*, January 28, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5979>.

⁷⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁷⁴Rutledge Long, “Recreating Ivies: A Community in Need of Tradition,” *Bowdoin Orient*, May 1, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4431>.

⁷⁷⁵Patrick Rockefeller, “Ah, the Beauty of Tradition,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 30, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/68>.

audience in February 2011, “is the opportunity for houses to reinvent themselves on an annual basis.”⁷⁷⁶

The Alcohol Divide

When the Committee on Residential life envisioned an “inclusive” learning community, it allowed for one exception: students may choose to live in “a substance-free dormitory.”⁷⁷⁷ Bowdoin calls the substance-free option “chem-free.” This option predated the commission’s report. But in its new context of total “inclusivity,” a chem-free dormitory sits apart from the normal dormitory system, and rests uneasily in the whole scheme, since it allows for a new kind of self-segregation and one with moral overtones. In addition, a large percentage of minority students at Bowdoin choose the substance-free option, in effect opting out of their designated role as providers of “diversity” in residence life.⁷⁷⁸ This is surely something the designers of the “inclusive” system did not expect—and it is not something that often receives mention in Bowdoin’s publications. But now and again it does.

A September 7, 2012, *Orient* article summarizes several remarks by Dean Foster on the subject:

According to Foster, chem-free dorms have tended to be almost twice as socioeconomically and racially diverse as other dorms. Having all chem-free spaces in one building has, in practice, segregated a disproportionate number of international, minority and native Maine students. Foster called the experience “a deprivation for the whole community.”⁷⁷⁹

What Bowdoin does frequently speak about, however, is the so-called “alcohol divide.” In December 2005, Bowdoin Student Government president DeRay Mckesson (Class of 2007) complained that “the division between drinkers and non-drinkers is growing, and it will be unmanageable soon if we don’t do something about it.”⁷⁸⁰

In September 2006, Dean Foster lamented the “growing alcohol divide.” To overcome it, he recommended, Bowdoin needed to begin “offering a vibrant social life that doesn’t surround alcohol.”⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁶Jeff Cuartas, “Foster Attends BSG Meeting, Talks College Houses, Alcohol,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 25, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6142>.

⁷⁷⁷“Building Community at Bowdoin College: An Interim Report of the Commission on Residential Life to the Board of Trustees of Bowdoin College,” February 22, 1997, 22.

⁷⁷⁸Bowdoin does not disclose the exact numbers or how high this percentage is, but it is high enough to have occasioned statements of concern by administrators.

⁷⁷⁹Eliza Novick-Smith, “New System to Challenge College House Affiliation,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 7, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7351>.

⁷⁸⁰Mary Helen Miller, “Bridging Alcohol Divide a Challenge,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 2, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1423>.

⁷⁸¹Beth Kowitt and Bobby Guerette, “Dean Foster: Collaboration Is Key,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 8, 2006, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1903>.

In 2006, President Mills also weighed in: “We need to do a better job of creating programs for students who do not drink.” According to the *Orient*, Mills “rejected the idea that there is an alcohol divide on campus.” “‘Divide’ is the wrong word,” Mills said.⁷⁸² It is perhaps worth noting that Bowdoin sees no similar need to accommodate students who do not wish to be part of the hookup culture. Choosing to live apart from alcohol consumption is permitted; choosing to live apart from promiscuity is not.

Alyssa Chen (Class of 2008), recounted a story in the *Orient* of a friend who felt ostracized when she stopped drinking:

She began to feel very isolated and ostracized from the friend group, and not only while they were drinking on the weekend. For a few days following the weekend, conversation would revolve around what happened when they were drunk, then for the few days before drinking people would converse about drinking plans. So there were few times during the week that the focus was not on alcohol, either consumption or conversation.⁷⁸³

Members of the Bowdoin community are generally sensitive about *who does* and *who does not* live in chem-free housing. This sensitivity took on institutional form in spring 2012.

On February 22, 2012, the Chem-Free Housing Review Committee released an “executive summary” of its findings. The committee’s charge was to “examine the pros and cons of our chem-free housing model for first-year students and make any recommendations that would enhance the experience of students.”⁷⁸⁴ A few of the cons:

- There is a stigmatization associated with living in a chem-free Brick. Specifically, students noted that residents of Hyde Hall are labeled (“othered”) almost immediately upon arrival to campus.
- There is a social rift that develops within the first-year class that can define the experience of students within the first year and going forward through their years at the College.
- There is an unintended consequence of our current chem-free model that results in racial, cultural and ethnic segregation of the first-year class. Over the years, students of color and international students have been more likely than white students to opt for chem-free housing.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸²Evan S. Kohn, “Mills Says No Alcohol ‘Divide’ on Campus, Agrees with AG on Underage Drinking,” *Bowdoin Orient*, March 31, 2006, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1702>.

⁷⁸³Alyssa Chen, “The Undiscussed: Trying to Shake Up Bowdoin’s Social Norms, Shortfalls,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 18, 2008, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3503>.

⁷⁸⁴“Chem Free Housing Review Committee Executive Summary,” Bowdoin College, February 22, 2012, 1, <http://groverrep.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/chem-free-housing-report.pdf>.

⁷⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 2.

The committee recommended that Bowdoin change its nomenclature, and suggested options: “Peer schools use ‘substance free’, ‘chem-lite’ and ‘low chem’ as descriptors. Other schools use ‘wellness community.’”⁷⁸⁶ Another of the committee’s recommendations was quite controversial with students. It recommended that Hyde Hall, Bowdoin’s chem-free “Brick,” be turned into a normal dormitory and that the college should “adopt a floating floor model on a two year trial basis” in which first-year dormitories would have chem-free sections to replace the old option of the chem-free-dedicated building.⁷⁸⁷

John Grover (Class of 2014), a resident of Hyde Hall who disapproved of the recommendation, drafted a petition to voice his quarrel with the Chem-Free Housing Review Committee. His petition—which received 406 student signatures, including 50 percent of the residents of Hyde—read, “We, the undersigned, hereby proclaim our strong disapproval of the proposed changes” (emphasis in original), and closed with: “Finally, we wish to express our belief that the issues of stigma and lack of diversity do not require such drastic measures.”⁷⁸⁸

A question naturally occurs at this point: Why has this issue gained so much traction at Bowdoin? In ordinary American society, teetotalers and alcohol drinkers live in the same apartment buildings and often socialize with one another. Why do Bowdoin nondrinkers see the need to have their own dorms? The question points to a campus culture in which students pressure one another to drink and where drinking is, despite Bowdoin’s supervision, often carried to excess. The students who want to opt out are seeking a social separation, not just a physical one.

According to the *Orient*, at a hearing with the Committee on Student Affairs regarding the review committee’s findings, Grover “argued that the stigma of students who live in Hyde has been exaggerated.”⁷⁸⁹ Kailey Bennett (Class of 2014), who attended the hearing in defense of the petition, agreed with Grover that the stigma was real but exaggerated.⁷⁹⁰ Grover and Bennett also spoke with the Bowdoin Student Government on April 4, 2012. The BSG minutes are fragmentary but useful:

- **BSG:** People setting themselves apart by choosing chem-free? Stigma?
John Grover: Stigma’s there, doesn’t warrant this big of a change.
- **BSG:** Chem-free community against this, why the Chem-Free Housing Committee come to these conclusions?

⁷⁸⁶Ibid., 3.

⁷⁸⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸⁸“Petition to the Chem-Free Housing Review Committee Regarding Its Executive Summary Report on the Proposed Changes to Chem-Free Housing,” submitted by John Grover, 2012, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁷⁸⁹Natalie Clark, “BSG,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 13, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7207>.

⁷⁹⁰Ibid.

John Grover: 50% of chem-free community signed petition; people didn't know about the discussion/proposal.

- **BSG:** Stealing diversity?

Unknown: Minorities aren't attractions at the zoo.⁷⁹¹

When the BSG convened a week later on April 11, 2012, its conversation with Grover and Bennett was discussed. Dean Foster attended the meeting, the minutes record, “to observe our discussion of chem-free housing, since the issue is important to him.”⁷⁹² “Derek” wondered if there are “negative consequences for students not in Hyde,” because Hyde was more diverse. Branden stated that making Hyde Hall non-chem-free would not relieve the stigma as long as Howell House, a college social house, remained chem-free: “as long as Howell still exists, there will still be a stigma.” Michael Yang believed that a floating floor model “*would* increase interaction and help deconstruct a stigma.” Sarah thought that the chem-free floors of the floating floor model would retain a stigma and that it “would only work to reduce stigma if no one actually *knew*...they were chem-free”⁷⁹³ (emphases in original).

Bowdoin ended up going far further than its initial recommendations. On September 5, 2012, Dean Foster announced that by the next fall no first-year bricks would be exclusively related to a single social house. Chem-free floors “will be dispersed throughout the first year bricks” and social houses will “be affiliated with floors from various first year bricks.”⁷⁹⁴

Above we asked the question, “why has this issue gained so much traction at Bowdoin?” We can now add a second layer to our answer. The rhetoric used by those who sought to abolish the chem-free dorm and possibly all chem-free housing—even the idea of dispersed chem-free floors in chem-abundant buildings—focused on the idea that the chem-free areas are “stigmatizing.” The oddity of this notion is striking: students opting out of a culture of drunkenness may indeed be labeling themselves but surely such a label is adopted voluntarily. It is not imposed by anyone and would not connote in any normal community a sense of shame. Yet somehow Bowdoin students and college authorities found it sensible to discuss this self-generated retreat into a social enclave as a threat to the welfare of the students who were seeking insulation from the culture of alcohol and drugs that otherwise prevailed on campus.

This effort to label as a “stigma” something that was plainly not might be taken as institutional hypocrisy—an effort to stop people who were shaming the community by modeling better behavior. Bowdoin was confounded by students making a moral choice that explicitly repudiated the college’s *laissez faire* attitude to intoxication that falls short of the need for

⁷⁹¹Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, April 4, 2012.

⁷⁹²Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, April 11, 2012.

⁷⁹³Ibid.

⁷⁹⁴Eliza Novick-Smith, “New System to Challenge College House Affiliation,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 7, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7351>.

“transports.” Hypocrisy it may be, but Bowdoin does have a way to frame the problem within its own conceptual vocabulary. As we have seen in our section on key concepts, Bowdoin tends to see “a difference” (e.g. any reasonably visible social demarcation) as something which causes conflict. Students opting out of the general scheme of things on campus to live a chem-free lifestyle were creating such a “difference,” and in that sense making themselves ripe for treatment as a “stigmatized group.” Bowdoin has difficulty imagining any social group that might put a positive value on standing aloof of the college. The near-automatic response to “difference” is to insist that it be integrated with the broader community. This puts in place a dynamic in which the college embraces “difference” in principle but in practice attempts to assimilate “difference.” In this case, Bowdoin’s embrace of “diversity” leads directly, if paradoxically, to homogeneity. Former dean for academic affairs Craig McEwen noted and worried about this tendency in his February 2011 Common Hour address, “Stories and the Common Good” (discussed above in the section, “Emphasizing the Common”).⁷⁹⁵ McEwen was not talking about “the alcohol divide” when he complained that “we keep running into differences that separate us, rather than unite us,” but his remark captures the spirit of the chem-free controversy.⁷⁹⁶ McEwen feared that, “By widening the ‘Bowdoin us,’ or any ‘us,’ we risk washing away difference.”⁷⁹⁷

Having recognized that students living in chem-free housing had created a social difference, Bowdoin could only conceptualize the difference as a stigma-in-the-making and therefore ripe for the treatment it prescribes for other “differences”—such as same-sex attraction—which must be integrated into the broader community. In the name of “inclusion,” the self-selected difference of opting out of the alcohol culture could only be “respected” by forcing those who wanted to be different to be the same as everyone else.

Security

Bowdoin security appears to turn a blind eye to underage consumption of alcohol at Bowdoin’s campus-wide parties. As Danica Loucks wrote in *Bowdoin College: Off the Record*:

Security is pretty lax when it comes to alcohol—parties have to be registered, and security will come and check in on a party, but underage drinkers can set down their drink when security walks in and they won’t get in trouble.⁷⁹⁸

According to Loucks, security will, however, “knuckle down” when it comes to the hard alcohol ban:

⁷⁹⁵Craig McEwen, “Stories and the Common Good.”

⁷⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 23:33.

⁷⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 28:27.

⁷⁹⁸Danica Loucks, *Bowdoin College: Off the Record* (Pittsburgh: College Prowler, 2011), 118.

Security's focus is keeping us safe, though. We have the lowest hospitalization rate in the NESCAC because we trust security and will call them when somebody might need help.⁷⁹⁹

On October 20, 2010, Bowdoin security director Randy Nichols explained security's "philosophy" to the Bowdoin Student Government:

Randy reveals that he knows that hard alcohol exists in great quantities on campus, but he's more concerned with the abuse of the alcohol more than its presence on campus. He says, "I'm more concerned about the 21-year-old drinking irresponsibly than the 20-year-old (who cannot drink legally) but is drinking in a responsible way." He also emphasizes that when [Bowdoin Security] sees safe alcohol consumption, they use a great deal of discretion and they try to use a great deal of common sense, because their bottom line is safety. Randy says that he lectures his staff and that they are getting sick of him saying it, "Our job is to do *for* people, not *to* people."⁸⁰⁰ (emphases in original)

Bowdoin's policy toward alcohol forms an interesting contrast with its policy toward sex. In both cases, Bowdoin faces behavior that will occur to some extent regardless of what the college itself does. When it comes to alcohol, Bowdoin tries reasonably hard to discourage recklessness. But when it comes to sex, Bowdoin simply facilitates and urges students to seek "consent." Both policies aim at some level to minimize harm to students, but Bowdoin apparently sees a much greater risk in one than in the other. Why this should be so isn't clear.

IV. Athletics and Sports

Bowdoin student culture is not centered on athletics or sports, but the college does have a large investment in and commitment to these areas. A significant percentage of students are recruited for their athletic talents. This plays a role in admissions decisions, though Bowdoin does not make available the number of students involved or the financial incentives. Rather, the practice of favoring athletes in admissions comes to light in an official report (published in 2003) and in various faculty complaints. The presence of recruited athletes on campus creates, as it does at many colleges, a certain line of division among students. Among students, there is a fair amount of discussion of this division, but we have found no studies of student attitudes or systematic sources. This section focuses on the campus discussions as an indirect way of casting some light on how athletics and sports affect student culture. Perhaps the most important finding is how little Bowdoin students care about their college's on-field performance.

One indication of this was Bowdoin's decision to strip its 2011 championship hockey team of its trophy following an incident (two months after the championship game) that the college classified as "hazing."⁸⁰¹ At many colleges and universities, this administrative decision

⁷⁹⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰⁰Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, October 20, 2012.

⁸⁰¹We report the details in the section on hazing.

would have occasioned widespread outrage among students. The response at Bowdoin was tepid. Some students expressed concern over the fluid definition of “hazing” that had brought the hockey team to grief; others applauded the college’s uncompromising strictness. The *Orient* took no particular stand and there is no record of student protest. This is surprising, considering hockey is the most popular team sport at Bowdoin.

Many of Bowdoin’s sports draw few spectators. In February 2009, Chris Adams-Wall (Class of 2010), a play-by-play broadcaster for a “majority of Bowdoin sporting events,” lamented in the *Orient* that in his two-and-a-half years at the microphone, something had been “glaringly” missing: fans. He was dismayed to see that even in the first round of the NESCAC playoffs for women’s basketball, “no more than ten Bowdoin students” had come to support the team. “There were more student employees at the game than actual student fans,” Adams-Wall wrote.⁸⁰² In November 2010, the *Orient*’s editorial board felt the need to explain the basic dynamics of fandom to Bowdoin students: “Our athletes thrive off the physical presence of the crowd; student enthusiasm can help fuel the benefits of home-field advantage and propel us to victory,” and, “Even if we are not playing in the game, being there still provides us with the opportunity to be a part of this community.” “[Do] something a little out of character,” they encouraged their fellow students, i.e., support your teams.⁸⁰³ In September 2011, Ted Romney (Class of 2015) exhorted Bowdoin’s student body to join together in something that “brings the vitality on campus to craziness.” In the spring, he wrote, the campus gets excited about Ivies (a week of drinking and revelry) and sometimes men’s ice hockey. But “sitting here in the fall, what is there?” Romney offered an option: football. “It seems that football games at Bowdoin have been written off, that people don’t think it’s cool to go to them, or that they won’t be fun.”⁸⁰⁴

But not every Bowdoin sporting event is sparsely attended. Women’s basketball has a faithful following. The Bowdoin-Colby-Bates rivalry in football is well attended, although football is otherwise overlooked. Men’s hockey is Bowdoin’s most popular sport. The biggest draw of the year is always the Bowdoin versus Colby men’s hockey game. On December 3, 2010, the *Orient* announced, “Because of the popularity of . . . Bowdoin vs. Colby ice hockey last season, tickets will be required for entrance.”⁸⁰⁵ Tickets were free (for men’s and women’s hockey) and seating at the Sidney J. Watson Arena (capacity 1,900)⁸⁰⁶ “ran out” five days later.⁸⁰⁷ In 2006, the men’s hockey team captain Bryan Ciborowski (Class of 2007) called a home game

⁸⁰²Chris Adams-Wall, “The Death of the Fan,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 27, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4211>.

⁸⁰³“Fielding Support,” editorial, *Bowdoin Orient*, November 19, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5821>.

⁸⁰⁴Ted Romney, “Students Should Show Support at Football Games,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 23, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6560>.

⁸⁰⁵Nora Biette-Timmons, “Bowdoin Brief: Bowdoin-Colby Hockey Tickets Available Today,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 3, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5867>.

⁸⁰⁶“Sidney J. Watson Arena,” Bowdoin Polar Bears, Bowdoin Athletics, <http://athletics.bowdoin.edu/information/facilities/files/watson/watson>.

⁸⁰⁷“Bowdoin Brief: Bowdoin-Colby Hockey Tickets Sold Out by Wednesday,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 10, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5903>.

against Colby the best weekend of the year, and opined that “there is nothing like beating Colby.” The *Orient* called it a “bitter rivalry.”⁸⁰⁸

Bowdoin versus Colby is also known for student drunkenness. Danica Loucks wrote, “The face-off between the Bowdoin and Colby men’s hockey teams is the biggest game of the year. Students often pre-game with alcohol and show up cheering, shouting, and all rambunctiousness.”⁸⁰⁹ Ross Jacobs (Class of 2010), quoting Durkheim, celebrated that Bowdoin versus Colby provided the college a “collective effervescence,” which, he added, “promote[s] a campus unity missing throughout the rest of the week.”⁸¹⁰ Bowdoin has anti-Colby chants, including, “Safety School” (meaning that Colby students were not accepted into Bowdoin).⁸¹¹ Colby students likewise deride Bowdoin.⁸¹²

Figure 41: Varsity Sports⁸¹³

Men’s Sports	Women’s Sports	Coed Sports
Baseball	Basketball	Sailing
Basketball	Cross Country	
Cross Country	Field Hockey	
Football	Golf	
Golf	Ice Hockey	
Ice Hockey	Lacrosse	
Lacrosse	Nordic Skiing	
Nordic Skiing	Rugby	
Soccer	Soccer	
Squash	Softball	
Swimming & Diving	Squash	
Tennis	Swimming & Diving	
Track & Field (Indoor)	Tennis	
Track & Field (Outdoor)	Track & Field (Indoor)	
	Track & Field (Outdoor)	
	Volleyball	

Bowdoin has thirty-one varsity sports and twenty-three head athletic coaches.⁸¹⁴ It also has twenty-four assistant coaches, five athletic trainers, and one diving coach.⁸¹⁵ In 2009, the

⁸⁰⁸Eren Munir, “Men’s Hockey Prepares for Mule Matches,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 8, 2006, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/2276>.

⁸⁰⁹Danica Loucks, *Bowdoin College: Off the Record* (Pittsburgh: College Prowler, 2011), 146.

⁸¹⁰Ross Jacobs, “The Triumph of the Athleticist Religion,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 13, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4136>.

⁸¹¹Patrick Rockefeller, “Ah, the Beauty of Tradition,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 30, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/68>.

⁸¹²Loucks, *Bowdoin College*, 86.

⁸¹³James Caton, Sports Information Director, Bowdoin College, email message to Michael Toscano, May 1, 2012.

⁸¹⁴*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 5.

⁸¹⁵“Staff Directory,” Bowdoin Polar Bears, Bowdoin Athletics, <http://athletics.bowdoin.edu/information/directory/index>.

total expenses of the athletic department were \$4,107,899, 3 percent of the college budget.⁸¹⁶ Bowdoin also has several club sports, including rowing, which became the first intercollegiate sport at Bowdoin in 1858.⁸¹⁷

According to Bowdoin's 2006 *Self-Study*, "nearly 35%" of students participate "in at least one sport during the year."⁸¹⁸ According to Bowdoin's 2011 *NEASC Fifth Year Report*, nearly "40% of students participate in varsity" sports.⁸¹⁹ Jonathan Goldstein, a Bowdoin professor of economics, claimed in a 2008 paper that 34.86 percent of Bowdoin's students participate in varsity athletics and 42.02 percent participate in either varsity sports or club sports.⁸²⁰ In 2008–2009, Bowdoin had 626 varsity athletes, approximately 36.4 percent of the full-time student population.⁸²¹

Bowdoin is a member of the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC), a NCAA Division III conference founded in 1971 that also includes Amherst College, Bates College, Colby College, Connecticut College, Hamilton College, Middlebury College, Trinity College, Tufts University, Wesleyan University, and Williams College.⁸²²

The "Core Values" of the NESCAC embrace a vision of its athletes and athletic programs as "representative of our student bodies as a whole, both at the point of admission and in their academic performance, preferences and educational outcomes."⁸²³ This not only involves a commitment to "diversity" and "gender equity," but also a commitment to "the educational and social opportunities made available to all our students."⁸²⁴

Relative to the rest of the NESCAC, Bowdoin's athletic program is only moderately successful. In 2010, the *Orient* conducted a study of Bowdoin's cumulative athletic accomplishments over an "eight-year period," beginning in 2001–2002. Of the two hundred athletic titles awarded by the NESCAC during that span, Bowdoin won 8 percent of the titles, ranking fifth of eleven. Williams "was the overwhelming force in the league," capturing 41 percent of the titles. During that time, Bowdoin's men's sports teams won only three

⁸¹⁶Nick Daniels, "Bowdoin Sports Average NESCAC Record," *Bowdoin Orient*, May 7, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5440>.

⁸¹⁷"A Perfect Balance," *Bowdoin Magazine* 77, no. 3 (Summer 2006), 26, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/bowdoinmagazine/archives/features/003304.shtml>.

⁸¹⁸*The Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2006), 61.

⁸¹⁹Bowdoin College, *New England Association of Schools and Colleges Fifth Year Report* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2011), 3.

⁸²⁰Jonathan Goldstein, "The Tradeoff between Extra-Curricular Activities and the Academic Mission of Small Liberal Arts Colleges: Why Some Schools Are Poor Educational Investments," unpublished paper, August 19, 2008; rev. February 11, 2009, 9.

⁸²¹Daniels, "Bowdoin Sports Average NESCAC Record."

⁸²²NESCAC, <http://www.nescac.com/landing/index>.

⁸²³"History, Identity, Membership," NESCAC, About the NESCAC, http://www.nescac.com/about/mission_statement.

⁸²⁴*Ibid.*

championships—two in cross country, one in tennis—compared to the thirteen titles collected by women’s teams.⁸²⁵

Despite the high number of varsity sports (thirty-one) offered by a school of less than 1,800 students—the fervor surrounding Bowdoin versus Colby notwithstanding—there is a sense that athletics at Bowdoin is not exactly a common good. According to Loucks, “Bowdoin athletics have a huge presence on campus in regards to the level of participation... When it comes to filling the spectator role, Bowdoin students are not quite as gung-ho.” She speculated:

Perhaps their love for being active and participating in sports themselves prevents them from sitting down to watch others’ games or competitions... Normally, though, students are more interested in playing their own sports than in watching others.⁸²⁶

The role of athletics in student life at Bowdoin has long been a source of vexation for the college administration. No president felt the influence of athletics more acutely than did Kenneth Sills (1917–1952). During the Sills era, the alumni association had control of Bowdoin’s athletic programs and even appointed athletic directors and coaches without administrative direction. In 1922, Sills reluctantly began to assume control of the athletic program, which he saw as a distraction from the college’s mission. He told the governing boards, “The College must run athletics or athletics will run the College.”⁸²⁷ Speaking to the Maine Historical Society in June 2009, President Mills quoted Sills expressing frustration with Bowdoin’s athletics:

I suppose that intercollegiate athletics were invented to keep every college president in a state of humility. They certainly furnish more trouble than all the rest of the College put together.⁸²⁸

Mills became well acquainted with this “trouble” during the earliest days of his administration.

In 2001, William Bowen and James Shulman published *The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values*, a scrupulous examination of “how intercollegiate athletics... affects the ways in which colleges and universities discharge their missions.”⁸²⁹ Bowen and Shulman found that athletes at “selective institutions” *without* “big-time programs”—including several Ivies and elite liberal arts colleges—enjoyed a heavy “admissions advantage.” These athletes generally performed worse academically than their classmates and worse than they might be projected to perform if they did not participate in athletics.⁸³⁰ Impressed by *The Game of Life*, the presidents

⁸²⁵Daniels, “Bowdoin Sports Average NESCAC Record.”

⁸²⁶Loucks, *Bowdoin College*, 95.

⁸²⁷Herbert Ross Brown, *Sills of Bowdoin: The Life of Kenneth Charles Morton Sills, 1879–1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 252.

⁸²⁸Barry Mills, “Maine Historical Society—Brown Library Dedication,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, June 27, 2009, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2009/brown-library-dedication.shtml>.

⁸²⁹James L. Schulman and William G. Bowen, *The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), xvii.

⁸³⁰*Ibid.*, 260 and 271.

of the NESCAC colleges contracted Bowen to conduct a study of their programs. The result of the study was a report called the “Academic-Athletic Divide.”⁸³¹

The “Academic-Athletic Divide,” the results of which were included in Bowen et al.’s *Reclaiming the Game: College Sports and Educational Values*, led to immediate changes in Bowdoin’s athletic recruitment policies. Sounding quite a lot like Sills, President Mills, on October 1, 2001—at his second regular meeting of the faculty— noted that “what surprises him most about his new position is the amount of time a college president spends on athletics.”⁸³² Mills had attended a meeting of the NESCAC presidents a week prior, which convened to discuss Bowen’s report. The NESCAC presidents, according to Mills, “felt that it is time for NESCAC to take a look at itself and review the balance between academics and athletics.”⁸³³

The *Orient* reported that the “Academic-Athletic Divide”

found...that 75 percent of males recruited by NESCAC schools to play football, basketball or ice hockey were in the bottom third of their class. These students scored an average of 150 points lower on their SATs than their non-athletic counterparts....[F]or the matriculating class of 1999, the report showed that while the average acceptance rate of NESCAC colleges was one-third of applicants, two-thirds of recruited athletes were accepted on average.⁸³⁴

Reclaiming the Game does not provide Bowdoin-specific data, but lumps Bowdoin into its larger findings on the NESCAC. The NAS has not procured a copy of the “Academic-Athletic Divide,” but, according to the October 1, 2001, faculty minutes, President Mills claimed that Bowdoin’s athletic programs follow the same patterns:

President Mills...gave a general description of the findings, which show that NESCAC schools, including Bowdoin, reflect the same trends found in *The Game of Life*.⁸³⁵

The December 3, 2001, minutes record an intense exchange between Bowdoin faculty members and former athletic director Jeff Ward. Associate professor of philosophy Scott Sehon, for instance, complained about the admissions practice of coaches who “hand-pick and recruit athletes, who are then put on a fast track to admissions, even though they have far less strong credentials than some other applicants.”⁸³⁶ To Sehon this made “no sense at all.” Nevertheless, he understood that Bowdoin was in competition with other colleges, and hoped that the NESCAC

⁸³¹See Will Jacob and Gemma Leghorn, “Decade in Review: Polar Bear Athletics,” *Bowdoin Orient*, March 5, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5177>.

⁸³²Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, October 1, 2001, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁸³³Ibid.

⁸³⁴Jacob and Leghorn, “Decade in Review: Polar Bear Athletics.”

⁸³⁵Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, October 1, 2001, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁸³⁶Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, December 3, 2001, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

would form “a collective policy” in which “the academic credentials of athletes mirror those of other students.”⁸³⁷

Ward defended the athletic program, claiming it brings diversity, entertainment, community, and alumni giving. For Ward, however, the most important contribution of athletics was its “educational experience.” Ward also addressed Schon’s criticism of recruitment. According to Ward, during admissions there is a distinction between “rated athletes” and “recruited athletes.” He explained that “rated athletes” have been specifically targeted by the coaches and constitute a far smaller number than “recruited athletes”—applicants with whom the coaches have spoken but who have not been specifically targeted.⁸³⁸

Former dean of admissions James Miller explained the meaning of “rated athletes”:

We have made a commitment to certain kinds of students that we believe ought to be here, including students of color, students from Maine, athletes, legacies, and children of faculty and staff. When we see them in the pool, they are given a “tip factor,” an extra weight, though this is unquantifiable. We try hard to bring those students, while recognizing that this is first and foremost an academic institution.⁸³⁹

According to Miller, in 2001–2002, Bowdoin “matriculated 99 rated athletes” and “admitted 124 rated athletes out of over 4,500 students who applied.”⁸⁴⁰

The minutes record eight other professors complaining that athletic obligations interfered with academics. For instance, associate professor of music James McCalla said, “I’m frequently told by students that they can’t finish assignments because they are busy with practice and have away games.” Professor of economics A. Myrick Freeman focused on the “low academic achievement...of rated athletes,” which, he suggested, “could be caused by the time pressure of sports, course selections, and travel.” Professor of history Daniel Levine made the most forceful comments:

To think that one fifth or maybe more of our students are here at least partly because of the tipping factor from coaches does disturb me. I would like to diminish that influence. I would prefer for coaches to recruit vigorously and for Admissions to do their work, and for the two to have nothing to do with each other.

He then challenged President Mills:

Barry, this is very much a one-man college as far back as anybody knows; the movement that we make or don’t make on this issue very much reflects what you, not the administration, decide is the direction we want to move in. Barry, it’s on you.⁸⁴¹

⁸³⁷Ibid.

⁸³⁸Ibid.

⁸³⁹Ibid.

⁸⁴⁰Ibid.

Mills announced that Bowdoin would reduce its number of rated athletes by 17 percent, a target of seventy-nine students for the Class of 2006.⁸⁴² But Levine was not satisfied. On February 4, 2002, he offered four resolutions to the faculty:

1. The faculty applauds the recent decrease in the influence of athletics on admissions and hopes the decrease will continue.
2. The faculty asks the President and the Board to consider whether Bowdoin can continue to field all the athletic teams it now does without unacceptable financial and intellectual burdens.
3. Bowdoin should not accept students with athletic ability who would not be admissible absent that ability.
4. The following should be added to the student handbook: “No student will be disciplined in any way for missing an athletic event because of academic duties.”⁸⁴³

On March 4, Levine’s resolutions were debated. Jeff Ward was unsure what, in light of Mills’s choice to reduce the number of rated athletes, Levine’s resolution hoped to achieve. Professor of government Paul Franco thought that the motions “seemed very broad” and he “was not at all sure what voting for them would mean.” Professor of government Christian Potholm commented that “some were biased against athletics at Bowdoin” and he “felt there was no need for these motions.”⁸⁴⁴ Nancy Riley, then associate professor of sociology, on the other hand, came to Levine’s defense. She likened resistance to his motions to the resistance to the closure of fraternities. She wondered, “What other groups of students might apply if there is less emphasis on athletics?”⁸⁴⁵

Levine’s motions were tabled. There is no evidence to suggest that Bowdoin has pursued any further curtailment of the number of rated athletes during the admissions process.

Many students share the faculty’s discomfort with athletic recruitment. An October 2003 *Orient* article clarified Bowdoin’s recruiting process. There are three types of athletes: (1) “rated” athletes, “who were supported in the admissions process by a coach”; (2) recruited athletes, who were not supported in the admissions process by a coach; (3) and walk-ons. In

⁸⁴¹Ibid.

⁸⁴²Will Jacob and Gemma Leghorn, “Decade in Review: Polar Bear Athletics,” *Bowdoin Orient*, March 5, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5177>.

⁸⁴³Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, February 4, 2002, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁸⁴⁴Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, March 4, 2002, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁸⁴⁵Ibid.

2002–2003, Bowdoin slotted seventy-five rated athletes for admission, down from ninety-nine in 2001–2002.⁸⁴⁶

In a November 2, 2012, email to Michael Toscano, Steven Robinson (Class of 2011) described the “stigma” surrounding slotted athletes:

There is a definite stigma attached with being an athlete. Because of the way the recruiting works (i.e. each sports team gets a given number of “slots,” and they give these slots to applicants who are stellar athletes but just average students) the provision of these slots is the subject of much debate on campus. I’ve overheard and taken part in a number of conversations based upon speculations as to who got slots—and those conversations are not exactly laudatory of those athletes.⁸⁴⁷

Remarks by associate professor of education Nancy Jennings in an *Orient* article supported Robinson’s comments:

My concern is what happens to the individual kid. Once they’re here they might be stereotyped. They might feel that they are only here for one reason and as a result, might not even feel that they can ask for [academic] help when they need it.⁸⁴⁸

But Robinson thought that—in addition to the stigma attached to rated athletes—there was a general disapproval of athletes among Bowdoin students:

Although a very large portion of the campus actually participates in some form of formal athletic program, there is a pervasive anti-athlete attitude in many campus corners. Athletic culture and behavior is looked down upon by non-athletic or less athletic students.⁸⁴⁹

For Robinson, however, the enmity cuts both ways: “The athlete’s attitude toward non-athletes is equally strong and equally acerbic.” These “social divisions,” Robinson wrote, creates “two distinct campuses.”⁸⁵⁰

In October 2001, two Bowdoin students writing in the *Orient* complained, “Athletics are at least as divisive to ‘community’ as fraternities—they are the largest cliques on campus.”⁸⁵¹ Benjamin Kreider (Class of 2005), writing in April 2003, was more forceful:

⁸⁴⁶Priya Sridhar, “New Study Questions Recruiting Standards,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 10, 2003, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2003-10-10/news03.htm>.

⁸⁴⁷Steven Robinson, email message to Michael Toscano, November 2, 2012.

⁸⁴⁸Sridhar, “New Study Questions Recruiting Standards.”

⁸⁴⁹Robinson to Toscano.

⁸⁵⁰Ibid.

⁸⁵¹BJL & NJL, “Realigning Bowdoin’s Priorities,” Opinion, *Bowdoin Orient*, October 12, 2001, http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2001-10-12/opinion_ed.s.htm.

Sports teams and social houses are the two main players that create cliques. At dinner, the tables filled with students wearing Bowdoin warm-up jackets are omnipresent. It is an unwritten rule that only members of the team can sit at the table.

It is undeniable that each sports team is an exclusive sort of club. Athletes from some teams are even known to engage in bizarre sorts of rituals on weekends. Many people remark that sports teams seem to have taken the place of fraternities, and this seems to be fairly accurate. Athletes often party together on weekends, and their parties are far from open.⁸⁵²

According to Danica Loucks, off-campus “team parties” are invite-only: “There are multiple parties every weekend. Sports teams host some, and you can get into those if you have friends on the team.” On the other hand, “Social houses do a bunch, and those are open to everyone.”⁸⁵³

V. Student Groups

Clubs are a major part of student life at Bowdoin. The Bowdoin Student Government reports “nearly 100 active clubs,” and maintains Club Funding webpages, a club “Leaders’ Manual,” and procedures for “Starting a New Club.” About fifty of these clubs have their own websites. Perhaps the key point to make about student groups is how closely controlled they are by the Bowdoin administration. No group is recognized by the college or receives the necessary financial support without going through a fairly strict approval process that emphasizes the administration’s abiding concerns for “inclusivity” and “diversity.”

Bowdoin does not categorize its student clubs, but for the sake of exposition, we divide them into twelve categories:

Figure 42: Student Clubs by Category

Avocational Interests	Athletic Groups	Art, Music, and Dance
Bowdoin Chess Club Bowdoin Animation Society Bowdoin Debate Team Bowdoin Cable Network Bowdoin Film Society Bowdoin Organic Garden WBOR 91.1 FM	Bowdoin Curling Team Bowdoin Cycling Bowdoin Cheerleading Bowdoin Fencing Club Bowdoin Outing Club Bowdoin Rowing Bowdoin Water Polo Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Bowdoin Ski and Ride Club Chaos Theory (Women’s Frisbee) Club Ice Hockey	A Cappella Council BOKA (coed a cappella group) Arabesque (ballet) Bellamafia (women’s a cappella group) Bowdoin Community Gospel Choir Bowdoin Meddiebempsters (male a cappella group) Bowdoin Music Collective Bowdoin Taiko (drumming) Broken: Bowdoin Breakdancing Curtain Callers

⁸⁵²Ben Kreider, “The Pros and Cons of Campus Cliques,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 11, 2003, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2003-04-11/opinion01.htm>.

⁸⁵³Loucks, *Bowdoin College*, 102.

	<p>Equestrian Team Mens Club Lacrosse Mens Club Volleyball Mens Rugby Mens Ultimate Frisbee Ping Pong Club Systema: The Russian Martial Arts System Women's Club Lacrosse Women's Club Water Polo</p>	<p>EleMental (hip hop dance) Improvabilities (improv comedy) Intersection (Caribbean dance) Longfellows (male a cappella group) Masque and Gown Middle Eastern Belly Dance Ensemble Miscellenia (women's a cappella group) Obvious (hip hop dance) Polar Bear Swing (dance) Salsa Club (dance) Slam Poet Society Student Museum Advocacy Council Ursus Versus (coed a cappella group) VAGUE (modern/jazz dance)</p>
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Religious Groups	Self-Help and Advocacy	Ethnic and Cultural
<p>Bowdoin Christian Fellowship Bowdoin Hillel Catholic Student Union Spiritual Circle Muslim Students Association</p>	<p>Active Minds (mental health) Bodyspeak (body image) Amnesty International Bowdoin College Financial Society Bowdoin Men Against Sexual Violence Bowdoin Outreach Bowdoin Queer Straight Alliance Bowdoin V-Day (violence/women) Bowdoin Women's Association Green Bowdoin Alliance Green Global Initiatives Safe Space Undiscussed V-SPACE Yellow Biker Club</p>	<p>Africa Alliance African American Society Asian Students Association Anokha (South Asian) Bowdoin Haitian Alliance Circolo Italiano International Club Korean American Students Association Latino American Student Organization Native American Students Association</p>

Political	Publications	Food
<p>Bowdoin College Democrats Bowdoin College Republicans</p>	<p><i>Bowdoin Babble</i> <i>Bowdoin Globalist</i> <i>Bowdoin Orient</i> <i>Quill</i> <i>Q Magazine</i></p>	<p>Bowdoin Food Coop</p>

Academic	Pre-Professional	Administrative
<p>Bowdoin Society of Physics Students Peucinian Society (debate) Robocup (robotics) German Club (language practice)</p>	<p>Bowdoin Women in Business Bowdoin Consulting Group</p>	<p>Bowdoin Student Government Entertainment Board</p>

Our categorizations offer some light analysis of Bowdoin’s organized student life. Clearly club sports and musical activities are very prominent elements in student life, and self-help, advocacy, and ethnic and cultural groups are also major loci of student organization. All of the clubs and student organizations listed in figure 42 have been vetted through a review conducted by a division of the Bowdoin Student Government called the Student Organizations Oversight Committee (SOOC). The SOOC consists of seven student members—the vice president for Student Organizations, the BSG treasurer, and five BSG general assembly members. To receive a charter from the SOOC, a student club must satisfy various guidelines. According to the BSG website, the SOOC works “closely with the Student Activities Office.”⁸⁵⁴

The SOOC charters student organizations but does not guarantee funding. For that student organizations must apply to another division of the BSG, the Student Activities Fund Committee (SAFC). The SAFC “allocates money from the Student Activities Fund to campus organizations”⁸⁵⁵ and is composed of “four class treasurers, the VP for Student Organizations, the SAFC Chair, and two at-large representatives.”⁸⁵⁶ The funds disbursed by the SAFC come from Bowdoin’s Student Activities Fee, and are distributed to the SAFC by the Student Activities Office.⁸⁵⁷ The SAFC is allotted a lump sum, which the committee then distributes to student clubs according to its own judgment. In 2011–2012, the SAFC received \$680,000 from the Student Activities Office.⁸⁵⁸

Most of the organizations funded by SAFC serve clearly wholesome purposes. For example, the Bowdoin Outing Club (BOC), an outdoor activities group, has over three hundred members and is Bowdoin’s largest student organization.⁸⁵⁹ SAFC allocated the BOC \$68,675 in 2011–2012. The Campus Life page on Bowdoin’s website includes beautiful photographs of the lush, evocative Maine coastline—one of the college’s most attractive features—and boasts:

With 3500 miles of shoreline, Maine has thousands of bays, tidal inlets and jagged cliffs interspersed with fishing villages, industrial waterfront, undeveloped coastline and the only national park in New England. Bowdoin’s proximity to the coast gives students a unique array of opportunities for study, research, and recreation.⁸⁶⁰

The natural environment has certainly always been a draw to Bowdoin for many students. In 1917, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s granddaughter, Hildegard Hawthorne, described the outdoor activities of Bowdoin students:

⁸⁵⁴“About Us,” Bowdoin College, Bowdoin Student Government, <http://students.bowdoin.edu/bsg/about/>.

⁸⁵⁵“Club Funding,” Bowdoin College, Bowdoin Student Government, <http://students.bowdoin.edu/bsg/club-life/funding-safc/>.

⁸⁵⁶“About Us,” Bowdoin College, Bowdoin Student Government.

⁸⁵⁷Diana Lee, “Bulk of SAFC Funding Already Allocated to 19 Clubs for 2011,” *Bowdoin Orient*. September 30, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6624>.

⁸⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁹“Outing Club at the Schwartz Outdoor Leadership Center,” Bowdoin College, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/outing/>.

⁸⁶⁰“Exploring Maine,” Bowdoin College, Campus Life, Maine, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/campus-life/maine/coastal-maine/index.shtml>.

Bowdoin's interests, aside from the business of being at college, are tremendously out of doors. The river makes a wonderful playground both in spring and summer, when canoes and boats are in constant motion, and in winter, when the skating is on. The ocean, or that part of it called Casco Bay, is only three miles away, and there are endless calls to the men who like to tramp through the woods afoot, to fish, to swim.⁸⁶¹

In the years since, the wilds of Maine have retreated further and further from the campus, but Bowdoin is still undeniably linked, as President Mills is wont to say, to "the craggy, difficult Maine coast and terrain."⁸⁶²

The BOC features a "full-time professional staff," including a club director and two assistant directors who provide leadership training to budding undergraduate outdoorsmen and women, who then lead their fellow undergraduates on a variety of trips and activities. Biking, canoeing, bird-watching, wall climbing, hiking, sea kayaking, telemark skiing, and white water rafting are some of the activities the BOC offers.⁸⁶³

The weekly student newspaper, the *Bowdoin Orient*, on the other hand, presents a range of tastes. Established in 1871 as a bi-weekly publication that transitioned to a weekly publication in 1899, the *Orient* typically publishes responsible journalism and offers students their principal forum to address the Bowdoin campus and alumni.⁸⁶⁴ It is an excellent source to understand student opinion. But the *Orient* also presents—not untypically for a student newspaper—lapses of decorum and judgment. Its annual parody issue, the *Bowdoin Occident*, for example, is little more than a collection of sophomoric sex jokes.⁸⁶⁵ In 2011–2012, the *Orient* received \$22,688 from the SAFC. It raises additional money through advertising. According to the April 12, 2006, minutes of the BSG, the SAFC funds allotted to the *Orient* include student "employee" salaries. It is the only student organization that receives such funding.⁸⁶⁶

SAFC also funds student clubs that aim at political goals. Some of these clubs, such as the Bowdoin College Democrats and the Bowdoin College Republicans, are mainstream; others are self-styled outsider groups that take as their basic purpose an effort to provoke reaction. *Q Magazine*, described in an earlier section of this report, for example, is such an SAFC-funded organization.

⁸⁶¹Hildegard Hawthorne, *Rambles in Old College Towns* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1917), 234.

⁸⁶²Barry Mills, "Commencement '06," Bowdoin College, Office of the President, May 27, 2006, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2006/baccalaureate-06.shtml>.

⁸⁶³"Program Areas," Bowdoin College, Outing Club at the Schwartz Outdoor Leadership Center, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/outing/areas/index.shtml>.

⁸⁶⁴"About," *Bowdoin Orient*, <http://bowdoinorient.com/about>.

⁸⁶⁵*The Bowdoin Occident* 140, no. 26 (May 13, 2011), Bowdoin College, catalog no. 4.5.1, folio 85, vol. 140, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁸⁶⁶Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, April 12, 2006.

Presumably the clubs that are SOOC recognized and that receive SAFC funding are those that have garnered enough student interest and organizational effort to advance their causes. Thus the large number of advocacy groups that have a progressive worldview or a left-leaning orientation and the complete absence of culturally conservative advocacy groups most likely reflects the range of student interest and not censorship.

Some of Bowdoin's requirements for organizations nevertheless deter students who dissent from progressive norms. For example, in order to be chartered a club must "admit all students regardless of race, religion, age, ethnic or national origin, gender, physical ability, or sexual orientation."⁸⁶⁷ In 2011–2012, the SOOC demanded that all chartered clubs be "Inclusive & Respectful: All students may join."⁸⁶⁸ For the 2012–2013 academic year, the SOOC instituted a new club rechartering process, which several students objected to as invasive.⁸⁶⁹ Ben Richmond (Class of 2013), who completed the process on behalf of the Bowdoin College Democrats, complained that "[t]he new SOOC rechartering survey contained many questions which to me appeared somewhat accusatory and abrasive, asking leaders to defend their club's charter." He continued, "It also contained misleading language that all clubs must 'benefit Bowdoin College as a whole.'" And it required club leaders to "hand over sensitive information like the passwords to club mailing lists."⁸⁷⁰ Survey questions include:

- Are there membership requirements for this organization? If so, what are they?
- How were your 2012–2013 organizations leaders appointed: Elected, Appointed, Other?
- Does your organization have its own email address? If so, what is the email address and its password?
- Does your club use a club mailing list? If so, what is the list address and its administrative password?
- Please identify organization activities and traditions you feel are essential to your group.
- How has your organization benefited Bowdoin College as a whole this year?⁸⁷¹

To an outsider, the required divulging of passwords and mailing lists probably seems excessive, but the rest of the questions appear benign. Students familiar with Bowdoin's often-coded way of framing things, however, detected something more alarming. "How has your

⁸⁶⁷"Charter Proposal Form," Bowdoin College, Bowdoin Student Government, https://bowdoicollege.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_01vXbRkaA3cM5RX.

⁸⁶⁸The Bowdoin Student Government updated its website for the 2012–2013 academic year. The former language has been removed from its website and is no longer accessible.

⁸⁶⁹Diana Lee, "New Club Rechartering Process Raises Concerns," *Bowdoin Orient*, April 20, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7242>.

⁸⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁸⁷¹"Charter Proposal Form," Bowdoin College, Bowdoin Student Government.

organization benefited Bowdoin College as a whole this year?” could be a question about the extent of a group’s “inclusivity.” In effect, Bowdoin appears to be asking, “Is your group inclusive and respectful of differences, or is it exclusionary and self-selecting?” And “Please identify organization activities and traditions you feel are essential to your group,” might be a way of ensuring that initiation practices—“traditions”—do not constitute hazing or “power differentials,” as the director of student life calls them.

Even though this new form was adopted in 2012–2013, it has long been a practice at Bowdoin to bar student groups from being able to choose their membership. In a March 5, 2004, *Orient* article, several student organization leaders boasted about their inclusivity. Michael Chang (Class of 2002), former president of the Korean American Students Association, described his group: “Since the 2002 academic year we have opened our group to the entire campus. We currently have two African-American members, one Caucasian student, and one Taiwanese student.”⁸⁷² Riquelmy Sosa (Class of 2005), former president of the Bowdoin Caribbean Students Association (BCSA), said:

BCSA is an inclusive organization that does not discriminate on any grounds. We encourage difference and diversity within our organization. Our mission is to increase knowledge and foster appreciation of the Caribbean region.⁸⁷³

The student organizations that bear names that suggest that they are primarily identity groups have formal declarations that they are open to individuals from outside those groups. The mission of the African-American Society, for instance, describes the organization as “a strong-knit, inclusive community.”⁸⁷⁴ The Native American Student Association pronounces that “inclusiveness is central to our mission.”⁸⁷⁵

Generally, Bowdoin’s student organizations are not allowed to decide who may join. Male and female a cappella groups are among the exceptions. There have been no instances, as far as we know, of campus religious groups being forced to admit members or to elect to leadership individuals who openly dissent from the religious tenets of the group. In October 2011, dean of student affairs Tim Foster commented on the September 2011 controversy involving Sandy Williams, the minister who offended some students in a sermon in which he cited Biblical teachings against sexual immorality when he conducted the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship chapel service. Foster said, “I don’t think all of our students who identify as Christian would necessarily feel that they can practice their faith within the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship.”⁸⁷⁶ It did not appear that Foster was inclined to solve this problem by forcing the

⁸⁷²Mario N. Lopez, “Posse Retreats to Discuss Race,” *Bowdoin Orient*, March 5, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-03-05/features04.htm>.

⁸⁷³Ibid.

⁸⁷⁴“Multicultural Life,” Bowdoin College, Student Organizations, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/multicultural/student-organizations/index.shtml>.

⁸⁷⁵Ibid.

⁸⁷⁶Claire Aasen, “BCF Will Not Seek Funding for Sunday Chapel Services,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 21, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6700>.

Bowdoin Christian Fellowship to amend its practices. Rather, according to the *Orient*, “Foster said he would be a supporter of student-led initiatives to build a wider spectrum of religious groups on campus.”⁸⁷⁷

VI. Hazing

The Bowdoin administration hoped that it had eradicated hazing when it closed the fraternities in 1997. Dean Foster, speaking with the Bowdoin Student Government on February 20, 2008, said that it was felt by the administration “that when the college disbanded fraternities, hazing would discontinue.”⁸⁷⁸ But things turned out otherwise:

Hazing happens with or without fraternities, though, in a number of contexts. It can happen in a number of organizations. It happens in religious organizations, athletic teams, etc.⁸⁷⁹

For this reason, according to Foster, Bowdoin chose to develop a new hazing policy to be put in place by the 2008–2009 academic year.⁸⁸⁰ Foster told the BSG:

We felt that it would be prudent to develop a policy (not a Draconian one, however) that was clear in our expectations but was written in a way that would value some components associated with hazing. There is a way to bond that is appropriate.⁸⁸¹

This new hazing policy was crafted as a response to a December 2007 ruling that the women’s squash team had hazed its rookies. The investigation was sparked by an October 2007 article in the *Portland Press Herald* that reported on an online photo album titled “Squash Initiation.” According to the *Herald*, the photos were taken in January 2006 and included images of players wearing T-shirts printed with the word “rookie” engaging in drinking games, and “one photograph [that] shows a woman’s mouth open near the breast of another woman, whose T-shirt says ‘Bite me here,’ with an arrow pointing to her breast.”⁸⁸² The *Herald* added that Bowdoin released a two-page statement which detailed the event, including the fact that players were “being encouraged to do provocative dances.”⁸⁸³ Bowdoin called the incident “mild hazing.” Dean Foster called it “mild to moderate.”⁸⁸⁴ On a scale of one to ten, Foster put the hazing “at a two or a three.”⁸⁸⁵ No one from the squash team was suspended, but several members faced

⁸⁷⁷Ibid.

⁸⁷⁸Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, Bowdoin College, February 20, 2008.

⁸⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁸⁰Travis Dagenais, “Lengthy Hazing Policy Draft Garners Some Criticism from BSG,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 22, 2008, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3342>.

⁸⁸¹Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, Bowdoin College, February 20, 2008.

⁸⁸²Jenn Menendez, “Bowdoin Addresses Team Hazing,” *Kennebec Valley Podium*, December 15, 2007.

⁸⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁸⁴Nat Herz, “Hazing Investigation Concludes ‘Mild Hazing,’” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 25, 2008, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3211>.

⁸⁸⁵Menendez, “Bowdoin Addresses Team Hazing.”

discipline for violation of the college's alcohol policy. Even so, Foster took it upon himself to draft a new hazing policy. (The definition of hazing takes up a full page in the *Bowdoin College Student Handbook*.)

Foster's hazing policy begins by affirming the validity of initiation rituals:

At Bowdoin, we value traditions, rituals, and rites of passage because they remind community members of their connections to one another and to the past and future of the College.⁸⁸⁶

Such traditions "build important bonds." However, it warns, attempts to "build these bonds between members must [be done] in an affirming way without coercion of any kind."⁸⁸⁷

Foster's assertion that Bowdoin values "traditions, rituals, and rites of passage" deserves a raised eyebrow. At least since the inauguration of President Roger Howell in 1969, Bowdoin administrations have much more conspicuously attacked, dismissed, dismantled, and abolished traditions, and attempted to substitute their own innovations in the place of Bowdoin's old ways. The assault on tradition has been ongoing, although, ironically, it is sometimes garbed in the language of tradition. The appropriation of McKeen's phrase "the common good" and its redeployment for purposes remote from anything McKeen might have endorsed exemplifies this.

Reminding "community members of their connections to one another and to the past and future of the College" is difficult when traditions are weak and especially when the links between individuals are substantially mediated and controlled by Bowdoin itself. Foster wrote in praise of "traditions, rituals, and rites of passage" by way of drawing a distinction between the unspecified good traditions that Bowdoin wants to uphold and the bad traditions—for instance, hazing—that he hopes to weed out. The difficulty he faces is that social groups bond over the question of membership and almost universally create some sort of initiation. The Bowdoin administration, by assuming bureaucratic approval of each student group's initiation procedures, ensures that the groups have weak social identities.⁸⁸⁸ The anti-hazing rules—because they are vague and expansive—give the Bowdoin administration license to intervene at will to tell each student group what it can and cannot do by way of recognizing new members.

The heart of Bowdoin's definition of hazing is:

any activity that is part of an initiation, participation, or affiliation in a group that...physically or psychologically humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers—regardless of a person's willingness to participate.⁸⁸⁹

⁸⁸⁶*Bowdoin College Student Handbook 2012–2013*, 26, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook/print-section.shtml#>.

⁸⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁸ "[Director of Student Life Allen] Delong told the *Orient* that this semester he met with multiple club leaders to work on changing their organizations' initiation rites." Zoë Lescaze and Nick Daniels, "Committee Concludes Meddies Hazed First Years," *Bowdoin Orient*, November 4, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6774>.

⁸⁸⁹*Student Handbook 2012–2013*, 27.

The policy offers a long series of examples, including “requiring a person to run personal errands; requiring a shaved head or the wearing of conspicuous apparel in public.” The policy provides some key questions to consider, such as:

- Is a person or group being singled out because of status?
- Are the activities being planned in advance?
- Is there a level of coercion and peer pressure involved and how easily are people able to opt out?
- Is alcohol involved?
- Is there a sexual element to the activity?⁸⁹⁰

Since adopting the policy, Bowdoin has prosecuted several hazing cases. The most high profile involved the men’s NESAC hockey championship team, which was forced to give up its title in 2011.

We’ll turn to that incident in a moment, but it is important first to reflect on the larger situation. Is hazing really a serious problem at Bowdoin? If so, why? And what lies behind the administration’s expansive definition of hazing and aggressive steps to stamp it out? Hazing has led to fatalities and criminal charges on some campuses, perhaps most famously at Florida A&M, where a drum major, Robert Champion, was beaten to death by fellow members of the marching band in 2011.⁸⁹¹ Less well-publicized events occur with some frequency on college campuses, usually involving alcohol. In November 2012, a freshman at Northern Illinois University died of heart arrest after a night of heavy drinking at a fraternity. Twenty-two members of the fraternity were arrested on various charges, including five on the charge of “felony hazing.”⁸⁹²

Any sensible college administration is aware that incidents like these could occur on their own campus and that for the welfare of the students and for the protection of the college from liability, they have to take the potential for hazing as a genuine risk. Is hazing currently a serious problem at Bowdoin? As far as we can tell it is not, but that may be due to the extraordinarily low threshold at which students get into trouble for alleged hazing.

That low threshold, however, may run a different risk—the risk of puritanical excess prosecuted by a regime of close control. In Bowdoin’s case the praiseworthy goal of protecting students from reckless harm is conflated with the idea of enforcing an ideal of total student equality. Hazing clearly emphasizes status differences between insider and newcomer, the initiated and the novice. Official Bowdoin regards such status differences with suspicion

⁸⁹⁰Ibid.

⁸⁹¹Associated Press, “Florida: University Faulted in Hazing Death,” Education, *New York Times*, December 28, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/29/education/florida-am-university-faulted-in-hazing-death.html?ref=hazing&r=0>.

⁸⁹²Associated Press, “Illinois: 22 Fraternity Members Charged with Hazing,” Education, *New York Times*, December 18, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/19/us/illinois-22-fraternity-members-charged-with-hazing.html?ref=hazing>.

bordering on hostility, and the moment in which a social group expresses the differences through overt action, it stands in Bowdoin's eyes as guilty of some form of "hazing."

This stretches the definition of hazing beyond common sense. The expression of status differences in minor rituals that pose no danger, physically or psychologically, is part of the ordinary human process of forming social solidarity in small groups. Bowdoin's attempt to suppress this tendency in many instances seems less a concern for protecting students from real harm than a determination to eradicate any element of "hierarchy" among students. While Bowdoin students are fully aware that they enjoy privileged standing in American society as students at an elite liberal arts college, the college is at pains to reinforce an ideal of egalitarianism among the students themselves. The heavy-handed anti-hazing rules are only one part of that egalitarian ideal—Bowdoin has eliminated class rank, insists that all clubs be open to all students, etc.—but it is an especially telling part since it creates a ritual drama of its own in the public shaming of those who run afoul of the rules.

On March 6, 2011, Bowdoin defeated Williams College 5 to 2 in the NESCAC men's hockey championship, earning its first championship since 1993.⁸⁹³ Two months later, on May 11, 2011, the men's ice hockey team had "an initiation event." The dean's office was alerted to the initiation event on May 12, and "promptly launched an investigation." On May 21, President Mills announced that Bowdoin had chosen to strip the hockey team of its title, making Bowdoin the first college in NESCAC history to do so.⁸⁹⁴ What happened between May 11 and 21 is unclear.

In the May 21, 2011, *Bowdoin Daily Sun* post in which Mills announced the forfeiture, he did not divulge the details of the incident, but he did explain the meaning of his choice:

This action...is intended to send an unambiguous message that Bowdoin will not tolerate this sort of behavior, nor will we compromise the values of this institution when confronted with clear violations of College policy.⁸⁹⁵

Mills expressed personal regret over the decision:

I personally celebrated with the team on the ice when they beat Williams for the title....They worked hard and they achieved their goal.

But, he declared, their achievements on the ice were delegitimized by their actions two months later:

With their recent actions, the team has lost the right to be recognized as champions.⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁹³Chris Roy, "Bowdoin Wins NESCAC Championship," *Maine Hockey Journal*, March 6, 2011, <http://mainehockeyjournal.com/2011/03/06/bowdoin-wins-nescac-championship/>.

⁸⁹⁴Linda Kinstler, "College Vacates NESCAC Title Following Men's Hockey Hazing," *Bowdoin Orient*, September 9, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6523>.

⁸⁹⁵Barry Mills, "Barry Mills: A Hard Decision," *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, May 21, 2011, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2011/05/barry-mills-a-hard-decision/>.

Mills seemed especially frustrated by the fact that the players involved were not cooperative with Bowdoin's investigation: "Compounding the problem was the fact that team members were not forthcoming when confronted about the incident." Students, Mills assured readers, were not in physical danger. "I want to stress," he wrote, "that no student was harmed physically in these events." Even so, it was a "clear violation of the College's hazing policy."⁸⁹⁷

Bowdoin's student body was left in the dark. As Linda Kinstler (Class of 213) wrote in September 2011, "what exactly happened at the initiation...remains unclear."⁸⁹⁸ Dean Foster, she acknowledged, deemed the incident "unambiguous." Participants in the incident told Kinstler that there was no hard alcohol at the initiation event, although rumors were spreading that "laxatives or other drugs were consumed." Kyle Shearer-Hardy (Class of 2011), former men's hockey team captain, told the *Orient* that he had no idea that laxatives "were being used," but added—in light of all the information that was gathered in the investigation—"it seems as if someone may have tried to add them to the mix." Athletic director Jeff Ward, whom President Mills said "supported" the decision to forfeit the title, provided a somewhat confusing and abstract explanation of what occurred:

They never endangered people, there were no hurtful intents in anything they were doing. Many of their actions, in different settings, would have been quite common on campus...it was more the setting—and *the whole power dynamic*—that was the problem. (emphasis added)

"Power dynamic"? Ward further explained that the punishment was not exactly equal to the crime:

Our punishment was so severe less because of their actions and more because the issue is so important.⁸⁹⁹

Jim Reidy (Class of 2013) reported in the *Orient* that the Bowdoin community was split over the question whether the punishment was justified. "While many believe that the College overreacted to a minor incident of hazing," he wrote, "others say that Bowdoin took a firm stance on a practice that is completely unacceptable."⁹⁰⁰ According to Reidy, athletic director Ward gave a two-part explanation for the punishment:

Jeff Ward said that the first reason for the harshness of the punishment was that "community is really important here, and in the end, hazing has the potential to create a situation where one group is being hurtful to another group or individual." The second

⁸⁹⁶Ibid.

⁸⁹⁷Ibid.

⁸⁹⁸Kinstler, "College Vacates NESCAC Title."

⁸⁹⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰⁰Jim Reidy, "What Did Vacating a NESCAC Title Mean for the College?" *Bowdoin Orient*, September 16, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6555>.

reason was that the team was not forthcoming at the outset of the investigation and lied about the nature of the incident.⁹⁰¹

NAS does not have “insider information” about what actually occurred on May 11, 2011. But the public explanations of Mills and Ward both suggest that the hockey team may have paid for more than the sum of its crime.

Our second high-profile example is similarly opaque. On October 26, 2011, the Student Organizations Oversight Committee (in a new role) ruled that the Meddiebempsters, the all-male a cappella group, “had hazed their first year members at a September 16 initiation event.”⁹⁰² Unlike the men’s hockey team case, the Bowdoin administration did not prosecute the investigation. The deliberation was left instead to Allen Delong, director of student life, and the SOOC, which, as previously discussed, works closely with the Office of Student Life. The SOOC and Delong banned “the Meddies” from singing at athletic and departmental events until March 10, 2012, something they had done since the late 1930s.⁹⁰³

The *Orient*’s editorial board summarized the hazing:

The senior members of the Meddiebempsters had been preparing an initiation night for a week before the evening of September 16. When the day finally came, the upperclass Meddies gave the first years a list of clues and told them to complete a scavenger hunt. Afterwards, they went to a senior’s off-campus house, where the Meddies were having a party. The upperclassmen congratulated their newly-inducted first years, who were then able to meet everyone for the first time. The upperclassmen offered the first years beer; two decided to drink, and the third did not.

But just over a month later, the Student Organizations Oversight Committee (SOOC) ruled that the Meddies were responsible for, among other charges, deliberately instilling fear in first year members, organizing a compulsory event that involved the structured consumption of alcohol, and distinguishing between their members by class year.⁹⁰⁴

A second *Orient* article provides further details. The initiation was revealed because a first-year Meddie showed up drunk to work at Jack Magee’s Pub, a campus dining facility. Director of safety and security Randy Nichols traced the student’s drunkenness back to the Meddie initiation.⁹⁰⁵ The *Orient* article describes the experience of one of the Meddie initiates. After the scavenger hunt, which led “them to historic College landmarks...they were driven to a senior’s off-campus apartment where the other Meddies were waiting to congratulate them.” There, “the two other initiates chose to drink beer, while he abstained beyond having ‘a few

⁹⁰¹Ibid.

⁹⁰²Lescaze and Daniels, “Committee Concludes Meddies Hazed.”

⁹⁰³Ibid.

⁹⁰⁴“On Hazing,” editorial, *Bowdoin Orient*, November 4, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6779>.

⁹⁰⁵Lescaze and Daniels, “Committee Concludes Meddies Hazed.”

sips.” He explained that he “never felt pressured to drink or engage in other activities.” In fact, he said, “There were several times when I was asked if I wanted to drink, and I said no.”

According to his account, the upperclass Meddies were fastidiously accommodating:

The upperclass Meddies were really nice about it, and more than once pulled me aside and said, “If there’s anything you’re uncomfortable with, you shouldn’t do it.”⁹⁰⁶

According to the *Orient*, Dean Foster, who agreed with the SOOC ruling, “emphasized that under the College’s hazing policy, initiation events may constitute hazing, regardless of whether group members willingly participate in initiation activities.” Delong agreed: “[W]e have chosen, as have many institutions, to say we’re not going to look at consent.... We’re going to look at the actions and the intent as more important than the reactions of the people involved.”⁹⁰⁷

Delong’s explanation of how this constitutes hazing echoed Ward’s explanation of the men’s hockey ruling. Delong conjectured, “I think that a definition of hazing includes a power differential.”⁹⁰⁸ What Delong means by “power differential” is explained in the SOOC ruling, which cited that the Meddies had wrongfully made “a distinction of members by class year.”⁹⁰⁹

The SOOC further cited a “product sexual in nature,” a “structured consumption of alcohol,” and a “deliberation of fear,” even though all participants consistently stated that the events were fun, friendly, and not coercive. But the SOOC elected not to take student testimony into account.⁹¹⁰

Puzzling to many on campus was why the SOOC was the body chosen to make the deliberation—it had never been chosen for such a task in the past. Dean Foster explained that this route was taken because the Meddiebempsters are a student organization chartered by the SOOC. Foster added that the SOOC was chosen because this was a “minor instance of hazing.”⁹¹¹ Yet, this was indeed a major expansion of its powers. The SOOC had to develop the process for the trial while trying the case. This led to a number of procedural complications—and perhaps even abuses. For instance, the upperclass Meddies assumed that the first-years were questioned by the SOOC—but it turns out that they were never asked to give testimony.⁹¹²

Even so, Dean Foster concluded that “there is no question that what happened constitutes hazing.”⁹¹³ The Meddiebempsters at least agreed that this was hazing as defined by Foster’s hazing policy. Several campus wits also agreed. The *Orient*’s editorial board accused themselves

⁹⁰⁶Ibid.

⁹⁰⁷Ibid.

⁹⁰⁸Ibid.

⁹⁰⁹Ibid.

⁹¹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹¹Ibid.

⁹¹²Ibid.

⁹¹³Ibid.

of hazing because “our operation involves depriving editors of sleep, occasionally compromising their ability to do schoolwork, and ascribing tasks to people according to class year and rank.”⁹¹⁴ Christopher Sanville (Class of 2012) and Keel Dietz (Class of 2012) accused Bowdoin of hazing first-years during New Student Orientation: “Orientation, planned far in advance of their arrival, singles out students of the new class from those of other classes, separating them physically, emotionally and mentally from the rest of Bowdoin.”⁹¹⁵

The Meddies were asked to apologize to the student body for their actions. In their apology, published on November 3, 2011, in the *Orient Express*, they reassured the community that “none of our members were hurt or ever in physical danger during the induction process.” And they hoped that their experience would spark a conversation about “what it means to belong to any inclusive student group at the college.”⁹¹⁶

Our third high-profile example included behavior which was obviously irresponsible, but why it was considered hazing is also unclear because incident details are once again scant. According to Dean Foster, the men’s rugby team hazed its “first years” in September 2012. He chose not to use the SOOC in this investigation, however, even though men’s rugby is a chartered club. September 15, 2012, was the night of “Epicuria,” the men’s rugby team’s twenty-third annual toga party. The evening ended with four students—including two first-year rugby players—being transported to nearby Parkview Hospital. Prior to Epicuria, the team pre-gamed off-campus. Later that day but still hours before Epicuria began, according to eye witnesses, several men’s rugby team members arrived at Thorne dining hall “wearing togas and were chanting and running around the room.” The players “sprinted two laps around the dining hall,” and then a freshman in a blowup horse costume mounted a cafeteria table and yelled, “Epicuria has been declared! Come to Ladd [social house] at 10!” Then “the team started singing.”⁹¹⁷ Later that evening, students were rushed to Parkview Hospital. According to Foster, “one of the leaders of the rugby team” alerted campus security that there was a problem.⁹¹⁸ Members of the Brunswick Police Department responded and broke up the party.⁹¹⁹

On September 20, 2012, Dean Foster sent a campus-wide email addressed “Dear Bowdoin Students” which related the determination “that clear violations of Bowdoin’s alcohol policy took place” both on-campus and off-campus, adding that the men’s rugby team “engaged in activities that constitute hazing.” He reiterated Bowdoin’s “well-established position on hazing,” and included the statement that Bowdoin values traditions not founded on “shared

⁹¹⁴“On Hazing.”

⁹¹⁵Chris Sanville and Keel Dietz, “Does Bowdoin Haze Its Own First Years Systematically?” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 11, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6783>.

⁹¹⁶“Meddies Issue Statement on SOOC Hazing Ruling,” *Orient Express*, November 3, 2011, <http://bowdoinorientexpress.com/post/12307311984/meddies-issue-statement-on-sooc-hazing-ruling>.

⁹¹⁷Sam Miller, “Ladd House on Probation for Epicuria Pre-Game,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 28, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7463>.

⁹¹⁸Sam Miller, “Deans Rule Men’s Rugby Team Violated Hazing,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 21, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7422>.

⁹¹⁹*Ibid.*

humiliation.” Foster reiterated that Bowdoin supports “positive traditions,” and announced that the team was required to forfeit two matches as a consequence of its actions.⁹²⁰

Three leaders of the men’s rugby team apologized via an *Orient* letter to the editor for “what happened to our two teammates and...the two other students who were transported.” They reassured the Bowdoin community that “the rugby team strives to create an inclusive and fun social environment,” and that they had no desire to risk the wellbeing of other students. But they denied the charges of hazing:

[W]e are incensed and embarrassed that Dean Foster’s campus-wide email labeled our entire team as hazers who intended to humiliate our recruits.⁹²¹

And they denied responsibility for the “two additional transports.” The students accused Foster’s use of the phrase “shared humiliation” as “particularly damning” and a false characterization of the team: “We are a team that values long lasting relationships grounded in mutual respect derived from our commitment on the field and shared social experiences.” They feared that the team’s reputation had been irreparably tarnished: “We are upset by the possibility that the Bowdoin community might look upon the men that play for the Bowdoin rugby team as something that we are not.”⁹²²

Bowdoin’s current vigilance in seeking out and punishing alleged acts of hazing, including those in which no one was harmed or humiliated, contrasts with the college’s long history of sophomoric pranks visited on freshmen. Louis C. Hatch discovered “hazing” in the 1807 Records of the Faculty, when Samuel P. Abbot, a senior, was brought before the faculty to answer for the crime of “fastening of the doors of said College [Massachusetts Hall] in such a manner that they could not be opened from without, with an intention to prevent the entrance of some of his fellow-students.”⁹²³ Hatch wrote, “College custom has usually required that Freshmen shall submit to hazing.”⁹²⁴ In the 1840s, with the birth of Greek life at Bowdoin, hazing became a custom of society initiation.⁹²⁵

In a November 2011 interview with the *Orient* an anonymous alumnus of Psi Upsilon who pledged in 1952 said that pledges at that time had to wear beanies, were not allowed to walk on the grass, and would be paddled by upperclassmen if they did anything to cause their disapproval. The hazing of pledges would crescendo during the final phase of initiation, “Hell

⁹²⁰“Dean Foster Re: Alleged Men’s Rugby Hazing,” email message to “students_in_residence,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 22, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7430>.

⁹²¹Phil Cuddeback, Robbie Deveny, and Matthew Marr, “Campus-Wide Email Misrepresents Rugby Team, Say Leaders,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, September 21, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7428>.

⁹²²Ibid.

⁹²³Louis C. Hatch, *The History of Bowdoin College* (Portland, ME: Loring, Short & Harmon, 1927), 25.

⁹²⁴Ibid., 67.

⁹²⁵Madeleine Pinne, “Historical Perspective: Hazing through the Ages at Bowdoin,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 18, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6840>.

Week,” which ended with official acceptance in the fraternity. The Psi Upsilon alumnus told the *Orient* that pledges had to go on “quests,” for instance, “get a pair of women’s underwear signed and kissed with lipstick by every member of the sorority.” Others “chained themselves to the fences of the state house in Boston protesting something or other.”⁹²⁶ He added:

We had to learn all of the traditions of the school. That was the primary function of hazing. You had to learn all the school songs (of which there were several), plus all the fraternity songs, and you had to learn the full names and the towns where the fraternity brothers came from. During mealtimes, they would call out your name and the upperclassmen would fire questions at you, [like] “where am I from, sing this song.”⁹²⁷

If you answered incorrectly, you could receive a “smack on the bottom.” Even so, he found wearing the beanies to be the most humiliating.⁹²⁸

From time to time in decades past Bowdoin presidents took steps to reign in the excesses of hazing.⁹²⁹ The differences between then and now are the zeal of today’s anti-hazers and the extraordinary degree to which they have developed a theory of human flourishing that requires the elimination of all traces of hierarchy and subordination.

VII. Partisan Politics

The scarcity of conservatives on campus, the relatively low number of registered Republicans on college faculties, and the disparity of financial contributions from faculty members to Democratic and Republican candidates are a part of a long-simmering national debate about the role of partisan politics in American higher education. Though minor debates about the exact size of these disparities occur, there is general agreement among those who study the phenomena that the faculties of American colleges and universities are overwhelmingly on the left in their political views and commitments. Bowdoin is no exception, and indeed the political coloring of Bowdoin’s faculty and the effect of that on the quality of instruction was a central issue in the genesis of this study.

Bowdoin’s student body similarly leans heavily to the left. On November 2, 2012, the *Orient* released the results of its “election survey.” The poll received 719 student responses, 41 percent of the student body on campus. It found that 76 percent of students surveyed intended to cast their vote for Barack Obama in the 2012 presidential election, 16 percent intended to vote for Mitt Romney, and 8 percent intended to vote for other candidates or were undecided.⁹³⁰ Of those polled, 47 percent were registered Democrats, 40 percent were not registered, 8 percent

⁹²⁶Ibid.

⁹²⁷Ibid.

⁹²⁸Ibid.

⁹²⁹President Samuel Harris (1867–1871) in his otherwise unnoteworthy Bowdoin presidency took special aim at hazing.

⁹³⁰Garrett Casey, “76 Percent of Students to Vote Obama, Poll Finds,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 2, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7668>.

were registered Republicans, and 5 percent were registered for another party.⁹³¹ The greatest disparity the poll uncovered concerned Question 1 on the Maine ballot:

Do you want to allow the State of Maine to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples?⁹³²

Among those responding, 92 percent said “yes,” 5 percent said “no,” and 3 percent were undecided.⁹³³ The overwhelming support for Question 1 is in part a result of the fact that “forty-five of 61 registered Republicans said they would vote ‘yes’ on Question 1, as did 72 out of 117 Romney supporters.” The author of the *Orient* article took this to mean that “many of Bowdoin’s conservative students are willing to take a more liberal stance on social issues.”⁹³⁴

The *Orient* conducted a similar poll just prior to the 2008 presidential election. The poll had 872 Bowdoin student respondents (51 percent of the student body on campus), of whom 84.3 percent intended to vote for Barack Obama, and 11 percent intended to vote for John McCain.⁹³⁵

In this section we look at the partisan divide among Bowdoin students by examining a long controversy (2003–2006) that rehearsed the usual arguments about why conservatives are scarce on Bowdoin’s faculty, what that means, and whether it matters. Conservative students took the lead in initiating this controversy, but to follow the narrative thread, we include the voices of some of the faculty members who responded.

Bowdoin has two student organizations devoted to state and national politics, the Bowdoin College Democrats and the Bowdoin College Republicans. Apart from the issues of gay rights, same-sex marriage, and the candidacy of Barack Obama, however, the Bowdoin campus seems to be politically quiescent. Even at the height of the Occupy Movement in 2011, for example, Occupy Bowdoin gained little traction. One hundred people attended its kickoff meeting—but less than a third of them were Bowdoin students.⁹³⁶

Campus complacency, however, is from time to time disturbed. In the 2005–2006 academic year, Alexander Linhart (Class of 2006), former president of the Bowdoin College Republicans, led an effort to push the Bowdoin Student Government to adopt the “Academic Bill of Rights,” which it was hoped would protect students from political bias in the classroom and protect faculty from political bias in the tenure process.⁹³⁷ A campus debate ensued that involved

⁹³¹Ibid.

⁹³²“Maine Same-Sex Marriage Question, Question 1 (2012),” Ballotpedia, http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Maine_Same-Sex_Marriage_Question_Question_1_%282012%29.

⁹³³Casey, “76 Percent of Students.”

⁹³⁴Ibid.

⁹³⁵Adam Kommel, “Poll: 84 Percent Support Obama,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 31, 2008, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3852>.

⁹³⁶Luke Drabyn, “Occupy Bowdoin Hosts First Campus Gathering,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 2, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6875>.

⁹³⁷“Academic Bill of Rights,” Students for Academic Freedom, <http://www.studentsforacademicfreedom.org/documents/1925/abor.html>.

the faculty, students, and administration—and revealed the feeling of marginalization many conservatives on campus held.

The Academic Bill of Rights was a document written and disseminated by the Students for Academic Freedom, an advocacy group associated with the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, a think tank founded by conservative activist David Horowitz.⁹³⁸ (The Center for the

⁹³⁸Ibid. Here is the text in full:

I. The Mission of the University.

The central purposes of a University are the pursuit of truth, the discovery of new knowledge through scholarship and research, the study and reasoned criticism of intellectual and cultural traditions, the teaching and general development of students to help them become creative individuals and productive citizens of a pluralistic democracy, and the transmission of knowledge and learning to a society at large. Free inquiry and free speech within the academic community are indispensable to the achievement of these goals. The freedom to teach and to learn depend upon the creation of appropriate conditions and opportunities on the campus as a whole as well as in the classrooms and lecture halls. These purposes reflect the values – pluralism, diversity, opportunity, critical intelligence, openness and fairness – that are the cornerstones of American society.

II. Academic Freedom

1. **The Concept**. Academic freedom and intellectual diversity are values indispensable to the American university. From its first formulation in the *General Report of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure* of the American Association of University Professors, the concept of academic freedom has been premised on the idea that human knowledge is a never-ending pursuit of the truth, that there is no humanly accessible truth that is not in principle open to challenge, and that no party or intellectual faction has a monopoly on wisdom. Therefore, academic freedom is most likely to thrive in an environment of intellectual diversity that protects and fosters independence of thought and speech. In the words of the *General Report*, it is vital to protect “as the first condition of progress, [a] complete and unlimited freedom to *pursue* inquiry and publish its results.”

Because free inquiry and its fruits are crucial to the democratic enterprise itself, academic freedom is a national value as well. In a historic 1967 decision (*Keyishian v. Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York*) the Supreme Court of the United States overturned a New York State loyalty provision for teachers with these words: “Our Nation is deeply committed to safeguarding academic freedom, [a] transcendent value to all of us and not merely to the teachers concerned.” In *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, (1957) the Court observed that the “essentiality of freedom in the community of American universities [was] almost self-evident.”

2. **The Practice**. Academic freedom consists in protecting the intellectual independence of professors, researchers and students in the pursuit of knowledge and the expression of ideas from interference by legislators or authorities within the institution itself. This means that no political, ideological or religious orthodoxy will be imposed on professors and researchers through the hiring or tenure or termination process, or through any other administrative means by the academic institution. Nor shall legislatures impose any such orthodoxy through their control of the university budget.

This protection includes students. From the first statement on academic freedom, it has been recognized that intellectual independence means the protection of students - as well as faculty - from the imposition of any orthodoxy of a political, religious or ideological nature. The 1915 *General Report* admonished faculty to avoid “taking unfair advantage of the student’s immaturity by indoctrinating him with the teacher’s own opinions before the student has had an opportunity fairly to examine other opinions upon the matters in question, and before he has sufficient knowledge and ripeness of judgment to be entitled to form any definitive opinion of his own.” In 1967, the AAUP’s *Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students* reinforced and amplified this injunction by affirming the inseparability of “the freedom to teach and freedom to learn.” In the words of the report, “Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion.”

Therefore, to secure the intellectual independence of faculty and students and to protect the principle of intellectual diversity, the following principles and procedures shall be observed.

These principles fully apply only to public universities and to private universities that present themselves as bound by the canons of academic freedom. Private institutions choosing to restrict academic freedom on the basis of creed have an obligation to be as explicit as is possible about the scope and nature of these restrictions.

1. All faculty shall be hired, fired, promoted and granted tenure on the basis of their competence and appropriate knowledge in the field of their expertise and, in the humanities, the social sciences, and the arts, with a view toward fostering a plurality of methodologies and perspectives. No faculty shall be hired or fired or denied promotion or tenure on the basis of his or her political or religious beliefs.
2. No faculty member will be excluded from tenure, search and hiring committees on the basis of their political or religious beliefs.
3. Students will be graded solely on the basis of their reasoned answers and appropriate knowledge of the subjects and disciplines they study, not on the basis of their political or religious beliefs.
4. Curricula and reading lists in the humanities and social sciences should reflect the uncertainty and unsettled character of all human knowledge in these areas by providing students with dissenting sources and viewpoints where appropriate. While teachers are and should be free to pursue

Study of Popular Culture changed its name to the David Horowitz Freedom Center in July 2006.) The essence of the Academic Bill of Rights is found within article 2, “Academic Freedom”:

All faculty shall be hired, fired, promoted and granted tenure on the basis of their competence and appropriate knowledge in the field of their expertise and, in the humanities, the social sciences, and the arts, with a view toward fostering a plurality of methodologies and perspectives. No faculty shall be hired or fired or denied promotion or tenure on the basis of his or her political or religious beliefs.⁹³⁹

Despite the apparent straightforwardness of these principles, the Academic Bill of Rights began to attract criticism as a Trojan horse, a document that, if brought within campus gates, would unleash havoc.

The story at Bowdoin began two years earlier, when, in August 2003 the Center for the Study of Popular Culture released *Political Bias in the Administrations and Faculties of 32 Elite Colleges and Universities*, a report that tabulated the political party registration of elite university and college faculties, including Bowdoin’s.⁹⁴⁰ At Bowdoin, the study found that in the “Economics, English, History, Philosophy, Political Science, and Sociology departments,” registered Democrats outnumbered registered Republicans by 23 to 1 (no comparable data is provided for Bowdoin’s other departments).⁹⁴¹ The report concluded: “These figures suggest that most students probably graduate without ever having a class taught by a professor with a conservative viewpoint.”⁹⁴² The study elicited a number of responses from faculty members, including several editorials in the *Orient*.

Priya Sridhar (Class of 2007), broke the story in the December 5, 2003, *Orient* in “Republican Professors Are Scant at Bowdoin.” Announcing the finding that “Bowdoin [Faculty]

their own findings and perspectives in presenting their views, they should consider and make their students aware of other viewpoints. Academic disciplines should welcome a diversity of approaches to unsettled questions.

5. Exposing students to the spectrum of significant scholarly viewpoints on the subjects examined in their courses is a major responsibility of faculty. Faculty will not use their courses for the purpose of political, ideological, religious or anti-religious indoctrination.

6. Selection of speakers, allocation of funds for speakers programs and other student activities will observe the principles of academic freedom and promote intellectual pluralism.

7. An environment conducive to the civil exchange of ideas being an essential component of a free university, the obstruction of invited campus speakers, destruction of campus literature or other effort to obstruct this exchange will not be tolerated.

8. Knowledge advances when individual scholars are left free to reach their own conclusions about which methods, facts, and theories have been validated by research. Academic institutions and professional societies formed to advance knowledge within an area of research, maintain the integrity of the research process, and organize the professional lives of related researchers serve as indispensable venues within which scholars circulate research findings and debate their interpretation. To perform these functions adequately, academic institutions and professional societies should maintain a posture of organizational neutrality with respect to the substantive disagreements that divide researchers on questions within, or outside, their fields of inquiry.

⁹³⁹Ibid, art. 2, “Academic Freedom,” part 2:1, “Practice.”

⁹⁴⁰David Horowitz and Eli Lehrer, *Political Bias in the Administrations and Faculties of 32 Elite Colleges and Universities* (Sherman Oaks, CA: Center for the Study of Popular Culture, August 28, 2003), executive summary available at Students for Academic Freedom, <http://www.studentsforacademicfreedom.org/news/1898/lackdiversity.html>.

⁹⁴¹Ibid. See also, Priya Sridhar, “Republican Professors Are Scant at Bowdoin,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 5, 2003, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2003-12-05/news02.htm>.

⁹⁴²Horowitz and Lehrer, *Political Bias*.

has 23 Democrats to every one Republican,” Sridhar quoted Christian Potholm, Bowdoin professor of government:

I believe there are only four Republican professors on campus, and I personally think it needs the attention of the administration and the Faculty Affairs Committee. Ideological diversity is as important as any other dimension.⁹⁴³

Potholm laid blame with Bowdoin’s academic departments:

The most troubling thing of all is that these departments are making no effort to provide a more balanced departmental perspective.⁹⁴⁴

Craig McEwen, former dean for academic affairs, denied that this was a product of institutional bias in Bowdoin’s faculty appointment and tenure process:

We do not ask job candidates about their political affiliations or views, so they play no role in our selection of candidates. It would be inappropriate to have them play a role in my view. Our focus is on the capabilities of potential faculty as teachers and as scholars [or] artists.⁹⁴⁵

McEwen’s denial that discrimination may occur during faculty appointment and tenure proceedings contrasts starkly with Bowdoin’s customary response to accusations of bias. In the cases of homosexuals, women, and minorities, as we have discussed, Bowdoin takes strong steps to counteract the possibility of bias. But Bowdoin does not see a possible parallel with conservatives. Why so? The stated answer is that in the case of political affiliation or views, Bowdoin *trusts* that bias played “no role” simply because political affiliation was not explicitly inquired about or discussed during the interview process. But political orientation can be inferred directly from a candidate’s research interests and body of publications (among other things).

Daniel Levine, professor of history, however, agreed with McEwen:

I think it’d be unethical to consider a person’s political point of view when recruiting faculty.⁹⁴⁶

Several students, on the other hand, expressed concern about the findings, including Daniel Schubert (Class of 2006), former chairman of the Maine State College Republican Organization, and Christopher Gaskill (Class of 2004), former president of the Bowdoin College Democrats.

The January 30, 2004, *Orient* included three faculty opinions on the study. In “The Non-Issue of Political Diversity on College Campuses,” Henry Laurence, associate professor of

⁹⁴³Sridhar, “Republican Professors.”

⁹⁴⁴Ibid.

⁹⁴⁵Ibid.

⁹⁴⁶Ibid.

government and Asian studies, denied that a problem existed.⁹⁴⁷ Laurence did not explain why these two very different forms of affiliation should be considered comparable, rather, he asserted, “Political opinions, like judgments about music, food, or sports teams, have no intrinsic bearing on teaching ability.” He instead provided an image of an ideal professor: “A good professor should be able to discuss all the controversies within her field, and be receptive to the different viewpoints of her students, regardless of what views she holds personally.” Laurence was especially disturbed by what he saw to be the underlying assumption of the debate, “that professors cannot or will not speak to issues beyond what they personally believe.” Laurence rejected the accusation that Bowdoin’s political homogeneity could threaten the integrity of its curriculum: “criticism of the preponderance of Democrats among Bowdoin’s faculty is based on an assumption [that] is intellectually bankrupt, professionally insulting and, fortunately, wildly inaccurate.”⁹⁴⁸

In “Not Necessarily a Problem,” professor of anthropology Scott MacEachern mocked those who worried about the imbalance: “Not enough Republicans on the faculty at Bowdoin? ‘Quelle horreur!’”⁹⁴⁹ MacEachern ridiculed David Horowitz for claiming elsewhere that “Africans were as responsible for the origins of the African slave trade as were Europeans and Americans.”⁹⁵⁰

MacEachern accused the study of trying to elicit “shock and horror” by focusing on the social sciences and humanities departments, which are known to be “more liberal than those in the natural sciences and engineering.” For MacEachern, to point out the preponderance of left-wing political views among Bowdoin’s humanities and social sciences was little more than cherry-picking. MacEachern asked, “[W]hat role should ideology play in the hiring of professors at Bowdoin?” and answered, “[N]one.” He agreed with McEwen, “[W]e don’t ask job candidates about their political affiliations or views, nor should we.”⁹⁵¹

In “Conservatives in Short Supply in Academia—for a Reason,” Marc Hetherington, then assistant professor of government, pointed to the recent experience of the government and legal studies department, which had three conservative faculty members—Richard Morgan, Jean Yarbrough, and Christian Potholm—who “have been among the most senior and hence most

⁹⁴⁷Henry Laurence, “The Non-Issue of Political Diversity on College Campuses,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 30, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-01-30/opinion02.htm>.

⁹⁴⁸Ibid.

⁹⁴⁹Scott MacEachern, “Not Necessarily a Problem,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 30, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-01-30/opinion03.htm>.

⁹⁵⁰Horowitz’s view on the African slave trade seems remote from the question of the merits of his views on professors’ political affiliations, but for what it is worth, the role of Africans in the slave trade is a well-documented historical fact. Africans in East Africa engaged in the slave trade with Arabs well before the beginning of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the trans-Atlantic slave trade was anchored on the African side by coastal kingdoms that raided inland peoples for captives. None of this is controversial and it is puzzling that MacEachern would reach for such an argument in an attempt to discredit Horowitz.

⁹⁵¹Ibid.

influential members of the Government Department for the past 15 years.”⁹⁵² And yet, Hetherington wrote, only one conservative faculty member had been hired in his six years in the department. From this he concluded that “departments run by conservatives have a hard time hiring conservatives just like departments run by liberals do.” Why so? he asked—and then answered: “The reason is supply; conservatives are much less likely to pursue a Ph.D. than people of other political stripes.” Hetherington added:

Unless conservatives as a group start to place the same emphasis on the accumulation of knowledge that liberals do, they will continue to be outnumbered. I agree that this is a potential problem for academia. But it is a problem that only ambitious young conservatives can solve.⁹⁵³

Hetherington did not provide support for his contention that conservatives do not, compared to liberals, value the “accumulation of knowledge.” The assumption seems to be that conservatives are less intellectual than liberals—or less intelligent. (As we will see below, this is exactly how a group of Bowdoin students, who agreed with Hetherington and his fellow faculty members, understood the implications of his comments.)

The only faculty member troubled enough by such comments to challenge them publicly was Paul Franco, professor of government—though not among the named “conservatives” in that department:

I read the faculty responses to the *Orient’s* article on the paucity of Republican professors at Bowdoin with a certain amount of disappointment.⁹⁵⁴

Franco agreed that “seeking to balance the number of Republican and Democratic professors on campus [is] absurd.” But he thought his fellow faculty members ignored the “real issue that lurks behind it”:

the degree to which political ideology shapes the content of courses and determines what goes on in the classroom; the degree to which education becomes politics by other means.⁹⁵⁵

Franco agreed with Prof. Laurence that it is right to reject the assumption that conservatives and liberals are incapable of teaching content with which they disagree. But, according to Franco, Laurence “is on less solid ground...when he denies that this ever takes place.” He was “less optimistic than [Laurence] that the vast majority of professors in the humanities and social sciences currently fulfill this lofty aspiration.” He continued: “My reading of the current situation

⁹⁵²Marc J. Hetherington, “Conservatives in Short Supply in Academia—for a Reason,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 30, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-01-30/opinion01.htm>.

⁹⁵³Ibid.

⁹⁵⁴Paul Franco, “Not Necessarily a Non-Issue,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, February 6, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-02-06/ltr02.htm>.

⁹⁵⁵Ibid.

in higher education is that there is a fair amount of politicization of the curriculum in the humanities and the social sciences.” However, Franco saw calls by conservatives for “greater ‘representation’” in the academy as a dangerously politicized response to an academy already politicized by politically liberal academics. Nevertheless, he concluded, “I do think there is something to be done and this is where I find the claims by faculty that political diversity on college campuses is a ‘non-issue’ and ‘not necessarily a problem’ most unhelpful.”⁹⁵⁶

Linhart’s quest to establish the Academic Bill of Rights at Bowdoin was born in this controversy. In “Indoctrination Needs to Be Addressed,” a letter to the editor in the January 30, 2004, *Orient*, Linhart said that Sridhar’s article had “brought to the forefront an important issue that is usually left out in the ongoing debates about diversity on this campus.”⁹⁵⁷ According to Linhart, Bowdoin had limited its “talk about diversity...to race or economic status,” which he deemed less important than “diversity of opinions and ideas.” According to the 2000 Census, he wrote, blacks made up 12.3 percent of the population of the United States and 3.1 percent of the faculty at Bowdoin. In 2002, around 43 percent of the population were registered Republicans and 4.3 percent of the Bowdoin faculty were Republican. For Linhart, the political disparity far outweighed the racial disparity. “Why is there such focus on diversity of skin color rather than diversity of thought,” he wondered, “when clearly one is lacking much more than the other?”⁹⁵⁸

Linhart’s letter received a sharp rebuke from thirteen members of the Bowdoin College Democrats the following week, who expressed “outrage” that Linhart “would bring race into this debate.”⁹⁵⁹ They considered it ironic that he seemed to be advocating for “affirmative action in college hiring practices.” Affirmative action was in place for racial minorities, they said, because minorities did not have equal access to institutions of higher education. They agreed with Prof. Hetherington that conservative scholars do not suffer from a lack of access; they simply do not exist in large numbers. Contra Prof. Franco they believed in the uprightness of their professors: “We believe the vast majority of professors are responsible enough to insure that their own political biases do not adversely affect the way they teach.” And that the student body prefers the intellectual modes of liberal professors to conservative professors:

Modern conservatives often have very simplified world views and see things in black and white....Modern liberalism advocates a much more balanced view of the world, and we believe most students prefer this more complex perspective.⁹⁶⁰

⁹⁵⁶Ibid.

⁹⁵⁷Alex Linhart, “Indoctrination Needs to Be Addressed,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, January 30, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-01-30/ltr05.htm>.

⁹⁵⁸Ibid.

⁹⁵⁹Bowdoin College Democrats, “Linhart off Base,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, February 6, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-02-06/ltr01.htm>.

⁹⁶⁰Ibid.

Before Linhart began his campaign for the Academic Bill of Rights at Bowdoin there was a state-wide campaign by College Republicans, begun in March 2005, to endorse a bill that would institute the Academic Bill of Rights at all of Maine's public colleges and universities.⁹⁶¹ The bill eventually failed. The campaign then moved to individual private campuses. In May 2005, the student government of Bates College, another small liberal arts institution in Maine, passed the bill unanimously.⁹⁶² Bowdoin keenly watched this state-wide effort. In April 2005, Benjamin Kreider (Class of 2005), was the first on campus to voice his disapproval of the bill. He doubted the sincerity of the student advocates, who were not, he thought, actually seeking the protection of students "on the basis of their political beliefs."⁹⁶³ Rather, Kreider believed the effort was "a politically-motivated scheme designed to increase conservative power on campuses and intimidate liberal professors," and added: "Republicans are launching a full-out assault against universities, which they perceive as bastions of liberalism."⁹⁶⁴

In his 2005 baccalaureate address on May 27, President Mills made his opinions on the Academic Bill of Rights known. Mills acknowledged the growing criticism that liberal arts colleges are hotbeds for an ideological bias: "Many assail what they see as a liberal bias in American higher education."⁹⁶⁵ To Mills such criticisms were unfair and unfounded, but he took them seriously as a reflex of larger social problems: "In my view, these very public and intense concerns about the direction of higher education are linked to our turbulent times, because it is during periods like this that our principles of education, open discourse, and academic freedom are most in question."⁹⁶⁶

Mills unconditionally denied that Bowdoin suffered from liberal bias: "Here, we are truly teaching our students to consider issues thoughtfully from all angles, with independent judgment and with a mature review and analysis of the underlying facts." He rejected the idea that Bowdoin was detached from and ignorant of conservative arguments, narratives, and opinions: "This College is by no means isolated from the wider world." He saw no intellectual homogeneity at the college: "Among us are active students, faculty and staff representing remarkably diverse points of view on politics, the environment, and on many of the important issues of our time.... There is not a single point of view at Bowdoin. There are many." Mills even declared that faculty opinions are welcome in the classroom: "Today, some worry that college students are studying with and learning from professors who actually have a point of view. But

⁹⁶¹Ted Reinert, "Maine Legislature Halts License-Suspension Bill," *Bowdoin Orient*, April 1, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/867>.

⁹⁶²David Horowitz's Lectures at University of Maine and Bates College Stir Passions, Raise Awareness of Academic Freedom Across Maine," news release, *Students for Academic Freedom*, September 29, 2005, <http://www.studentsforacademicfreedom.org/news/1228/MaineCRPressrelease093005.htm>.

⁹⁶³Benjamin Kreider, "Academic Freedom Bill Is Serious Misnomer," *Bowdoin Orient*, April 8, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/874>.

⁹⁶⁴Ibid.

⁹⁶⁵Barry Mills, "Baccalaureate '05," Bowdoin College, Office of the President, May 27, 2005, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2005/baccalaureate-05.shtml>.

⁹⁶⁶Ibid.

for me, having an opinion—a perspective on complex issues—is entirely appropriate for educated scholars who are perceptive, thoughtful, and analytical.”⁹⁶⁷

Of course, the issue at hand was not whether having a “perspective” is legitimate, but whether an unbiased education is possible when taught by a faculty that presents only one political perspective, or at best a limited group of closely allied perspectives, which seem to exclude key intellectual and political alternatives. President Mills simply *trusted* that the viewpoints of faculty members would not have a negative result: “I don’t worry that our students are somehow being corrupted or brainwashed by these opinions.”⁹⁶⁸

Linhart began his campaign for the Academic Bill of Rights in fall 2005. In November 2005, some conservative students voiced complaints about their inability to hold their opinions openly and without censure. Ferd Convery (Class of 2006) said that he “had teachers who have had such an agenda because of their political biases that they refuse to even entertain ideas which disagree with their own.” He complained that he received poor grades because “[I] refused to give in to my teacher’s agenda, and numerous students in that class had the same thing happen to them.”⁹⁶⁹ Another student claimed that within weeks of arriving at Bowdoin, he “no longer felt comfortable” expressing his opinion: “[M]y professors continually derided the institutions and values I held sacred, actively compelling me to let my voice fall silent.”⁹⁷⁰ A student who identified as a Christian said that “professors have expressed contempt towards my faith in God.” He complained of being berated by a professor and about another who threw the Bible on the floor.⁹⁷¹

Prof. Franco sympathized with the conservative students at Bowdoin: “I do think it is sometimes difficult for conservative students to speak up in class because they feel that they are in the minority.”⁹⁷²

On November 4, 2005, the *Orient* announced that the Bowdoin Student Government would distribute a survey to poll student opinion on the Academic Bill of Rights.⁹⁷³ The survey had 649 student respondents (39 percent of the student body), of whom “98 said that they felt they had been discriminated against in an academic setting because of their political, religious, or sexual beliefs.”⁹⁷⁴ To the question, “Do you believe that a professor’s political, religious, or

⁹⁶⁷Ibid.

⁹⁶⁸Ibid.

⁹⁶⁹Cati Mitchell, “Students Question Political Diversity,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 18, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1396>.

⁹⁷⁰Ibid.

⁹⁷¹Ibid.

⁹⁷²Ibid.

⁹⁷³Cati Mitchell, “Bowdoin Student Government: Orient Coverage,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 4, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1317>.

⁹⁷⁴Mitchell, “Students Question Political Diversity.”

sexual leanings influences the way he/she teaches the class?” 459 students “said ‘Yes,’ while 190 said ‘No.’”⁹⁷⁵

Associate professor of history Patrick Rael offered his thoughts on the Academic Bill of Rights in the December 2, 2005, *Orient*.⁹⁷⁶ According to Rael, some of his fellow faculty members “disdain” the argument “that a preponderance of liberal professors...stifles intellectual curiosity and renders conservative students on campus a disempowered minority.” To them, it is “a mere partisan ploy.” Here, Rael parted with fellow faculty:

After all, the “post-” intellectuals—post-modernists, post-structuralists, and post-colonialists—have been making a more sophisticated form of the same argument for several decades now, merely from the other side of the bench...In light of this, it seems rather bad grace, once the argument is made from the other side, to retreat into claims of scholarly objectivism and the virtues of universal truth.”⁹⁷⁷

Even so, Rael found deep fault with the conservative students. Their failure was that they made “a political rather than an intellectual argument.” “It simply has no credibility as an academic claim,” he wrote. He accused the students of not understanding that “Republican and Democrat are not static categories.” The lesson Rael drew from this was that creating political parity at Bowdoin was not possible: “Who would determine where potential professors belonged on such a scale?” Such attempts, according to Rael, would politicize hiring and tenure, processes designed to be resistant to “political abuse.” He accused the conservative students of having a “policing ideology, like totalitarian states or McCarthyite America.” He called them “deeply anti-democratic” and accused them of a “push for ideological control.” Their complaint about liberal bias “insults the professional integrity of faculty members,” Rael wrote, and “degrades our understanding of the scholarly mission.” He labeled their complaint “a cynical projection of the Far Right’s desire for ideological influence onto perhaps the last place where free and independent inquiry are preserved.”⁹⁷⁸

Rael closed with a challenge: “If I’m wrong, show me. Show the campus.”⁹⁷⁹

Brian May (Class of 2006) reminded Rael that “almost 100 students out of 650 said they had felt discriminated against in the classroom based on their political beliefs. This is 100 students too many.”⁹⁸⁰

⁹⁷⁵Ibid.

⁹⁷⁶Patrick Rael, “Political Control Hurts Academia,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 2, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1386>.

⁹⁷⁷Ibid.

⁹⁷⁸Ibid.

⁹⁷⁹Ibid.

⁹⁸⁰Brian May, “Conservatives Do Not Want Political Bias,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, December 9, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1463>.

Campus debate continued, especially in the Bowdoin Student Government. After several months of wrangling, rewording, and emendation, on February 1, 2006, the Academic Bill of Rights was put to a vote and soundly defeated 19 to 1—Linhart being the only member in favor.⁹⁸¹ But the issue could not be left untouched, because, in the BSG’s survey on the Academic Bill of Rights, “400 students” urged the BSG to “do something to remedy problems with academic bias.”⁹⁸² The remedy was the creation of an Academic Bias Incident Group.⁹⁸³ During debate over the incident group, the BSG determined that it should function anonymously, because “on campus it is very politically incorrect to be a conservative.”⁹⁸⁴ The resolution barely passed: “12 yes, 10 no, 2 abstentions.”⁹⁸⁵ The BSG imagined the incident group as a faculty committee chaired by the dean for academic affairs. The BSG knew that it had no authority to form such a group, so its passage was seen as a mere request to the administration.

Even though the passage of the Academic Bias Incident Group could be seen at best as a limited and potentially temporary victory, the Maine College Republicans published a press release entitled, “Bowdoin College Student Government Endorses Academic Bill of Rights.”⁹⁸⁶ It triumphantly quoted Linhart:

I am pleased to see the Bowdoin Student Government make a strong statement tonight in support of academic freedom. The BSG has sent a clear message that the ideological imbalance that is unfortunately such a large part of many students’ academic experience on this campus is not a value endorsed by student leaders at Bowdoin.⁹⁸⁷

The press release was picked up by several local news outlets, which angered many on the BSG who thought that their intentions had been distorted.⁹⁸⁸

Linhart’s triumphalism was short lived. At the February 6, 2006, faculty meeting, former Dean McEwen read the proposal aloud:

The Bowdoin Student Government endorses the creation of an Academic Bias Incident Group. The Academic Bias Incident Group will meet at the initiative of the Dean of Academic Affairs in response to any incident of academic bias or perceived academic bias in any form, whether discrimination, harassment, or other intolerance, for the purpose of sharing all facts available at the time and of designing a course of action

⁹⁸¹Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, Bowdoin College, February 1, 2006.

⁹⁸²Ibid.

⁹⁸³Ibid.

⁹⁸⁴Ibid.

⁹⁸⁵Ibid.

⁹⁸⁶Nat Herz, “Dean McEwen Says BSG Proposal Would Do ‘Enormous Harm,’” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 10, 2006, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1572>.

⁹⁸⁷“Bowdoin College Student Government Endorses Academic Bill of Rights,” *Magic City Morning Star*, February 6, 2006, http://www.magic-city-news.com/Education_10/Bowdoin_College_Student_Government_Endorses_Academ_5315_printer5315.shtml.

⁹⁸⁸Ibid.

appropriate to the incident. This committee will be chaired by the Dean of Academic Affairs and made up of at least two students.⁹⁸⁹

McEwen claimed “that the formation of such a group would undermine free inquiry in classrooms and would work against the principles it invoked.” He stated his intention to “attend the upcoming meeting of the Student Government to discuss these concerns.” President Mills declared himself unequivocally opposed to the Academic Bias Incident Group.⁹⁹⁰

McEwen attended the February 8, 2006, BSG meeting. McEwen expressed his opinion that rather than protect academic freedom, the incident group would actually stifle it. He acknowledged “that there are concerns that we share over appropriate expression of beliefs.” Even so, Bowdoin would “not create the group BSG voted to create last week” because the group “would do enormous harm to freedom of expression.” He called it a “surveillance group,” and said it would damage the classroom. The “College can only survive when faculty have [the] freedom to act,” the “freedom to make students uncomfortable.” He admitted, “Some of the use of this freedom may be construed as bias,” but that a group “looking over the shoulders” of faculty is not viable. “Such a group,” he said, “simply won’t work in an academic community.”⁹⁹¹

While McEwen acknowledged the legitimacy of the students’ concerns he did not propose a remedy or even suggest further study. Bowdoin has yet to propose an alternative solution to the “concerns.”

During the 2012 Presidential election, complaints of conservative students resurfaced. The *Orient* reported that at an October 2012 lecture by Bob White (Class of 1977), chairman of the Romney-Ryan campaign, “Republican students at the lecture and at the reception that followed repeatedly referred to feeling ‘closeted’ on Bowdoin’s liberal campus.”⁹⁹² Tyler Silver (Class of 2013), co-chair of the Bowdoin College Republicans, said that “there’s less tolerance on our campus for even viewing the conservative side of things.”⁹⁹³ Samuel Sabasteanski (Class of 2013), co-chair of the Bowdoin College Republicans, said that while manning the College Republicans table at the Student Activities Fair in September, a student called him “a bigot for not supporting gay marriage.” Sabasteanski said, “It was acceptable for them to heckle me because I’m a Republican.”⁹⁹⁴ John Grover (Class of 2014) described a conversation that he had overheard: “[Y]ou should not be Facebook friends or real life friends with someone who would

⁹⁸⁹Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, February 6, 2006, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁹⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹⁹¹Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, Bowdoin College, February 8, 2006.

⁹⁹²Sam Miller, “White ’77 Discusses Role as Romney’s ‘Wingman,’” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 19, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7555>.

⁹⁹³Eliza Novick-Smith, “Election Calls into Question Free Speech, Balance of Discourse on Campus,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 2, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7672>.

⁹⁹⁴Ibid.

vote for Romney because those people are, in so many words, evil, because they're supporting so many of his policies that are sexist, racist or homophobic."⁹⁹⁵

President Mills's views on liberal bias at Bowdoin appear somewhat fluid. Although he emphatically denied the existence of bias in his 2005 baccalaureate address, when he returned to the theme in his 2010 convocation speech he allowed that a fair number of outsiders saw such bias at the college and it worried him enough that he called for greater diversity of opinion on campus. But even as President Mills appeared to be widening the circle of discourse, as we have seen, he preemptively marked critics of diversity as unwelcome.

VIII. Religion

Bowdoin was founded as a religious college and through much of its history took religious commitment and observance seriously. These concerns were institutionally eclipsed by the 1960s and remain out of mind for most students. In summer 2001, the *Princeton Review* ranked Bowdoin among the colleges at which "students ignore God on a regular basis."⁹⁹⁶ But that is not to say that religious life is completely irrelevant to Bowdoin students. We distinguish four ways in which religion bears on student culture. First, most students acknowledge a personal religious background at the time they begin their studies at Bowdoin. Second, a significant minority of Bowdoin students remain active in their faiths or acquire new ones as undergraduates. Third, some religious activities have provoked public controversy at Bowdoin. Fourth, religious attitudes—piety, attention to transcendent realities and ultimate values, creedal orthodoxy, and personal sacrifice—have migrated for many Bowdoin students to ostensibly secular forms.

In this last sense, Bowdoin remains not only religious, but devoutly and intensely so. Bowdoin students, who generally associate "religion" with churches, temples, mosques, etc., and worship of God, rarely think of themselves as "religious," but it is indeed the term that best describes the complex of prevailing views among them. We have in mind the well-known definition of religion offered by the late anthropologist Clifford Geertz:

a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.⁹⁹⁷

It is probably best to think of religion in the cultural life of Bowdoin students as inhabiting two overlapping domains: *theistic religion*, self-consciously styled as "religion" and typically pursued in socially demarcated spaces and occasions; and *secular religion*, self-consciously

⁹⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁹⁶Cited in Barry Mills, "Convocation '01," Bowdoin College, Office of the President, August 29, 2001, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2001/convocation-01.shtml>.

⁹⁹⁷Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966), xliii, 176.

styled as non-religious, taking for granted its own intellectual and moral validity, and ambient on campus. Formal religion has retreated to a realm of privacy and acknowledgment that it is the special concern of the few. Secular religion is the common ground of student cultural life in which all students, including those who have more traditional religious commitments, interact. At Bowdoin this common ground was once defined and occupied by Congregationalism. Today it is occupied by the constellation of themes and creeds described earlier in this report as “key concepts.”

“Religion at Bowdoin College”⁹⁹⁸

In 2003, Bowdoin’s incoming class of 2007 indicated that “54.6 percent of students self-identify as Protestant/Christian or Roman Catholic, 6.7 percent are Jewish while Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus also comprised 6.7 percent of the freshman class,” and “just over 30 percent reported that they had no religious preference.”⁹⁹⁹ These numbers, however, do not reflect active practice, or necessarily personal belief.

Student religious organizations receive funds from the Student Activities Funding Committee and are chartered by the Student Organizations Oversight Committee. In 2012–2013, there were four SOOC chartered student groups classified as “religious” —Bowdoin Christian Fellowship, Bowdoin Hillel, Catholic Student Union, and Muslim Students Association—and one classified as “spiritual”—Circle.¹⁰⁰⁰

In *Religion at Bowdoin College*, Ernst Christian Helmreich observed that in 1974 Bowdoin Christian Fellowship (BCF),

a rather small ecumenically oriented group of students, organized a series of meetings in Terrace Under the Moulton Union for Bible study, study of Christian teaching, and music. A few chapel-forum meetings were held at the regular chapel hour, but no sustained program was carried through.¹⁰⁰¹

BCF still exists. In recent years, as we have seen, it has been caught up in controversies with students and campus officials who object to some of its teachings.

In October 2008 the *Orient* reported that the BCF had “more than 100 contacts on [its] e-mail list and a consistent group of 30 to 40 students attending weekly meetings.”¹⁰⁰² The student leadership of BCF is mentored by representatives of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, husband

⁹⁹⁸For a more intimate look at Bowdoin’s religious history, we recommend the excellent and hard to find *Religion at Bowdoin College: A History* (Bowdoin College, 1981), by Ernst Christian Helmreich, former professor of history and political science at Bowdoin.

⁹⁹⁹Evron Legall, “Community Reflects on Prayer, *Passion*,” *Bowdoin Orient*, March 5, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-03-05/features02.htm>.

¹⁰⁰⁰“Student Organizations,” Bowdoin College, Bowdoin Student Government, <http://students.bowdoin.edu/bsg/club-life/>.

¹⁰⁰¹Helmreich, *Religion at Bowdoin*, 166–67.

¹⁰⁰²Caitlin Beach, “All in Good Faith: Bowdoin’s Christian Population Congregates for ‘Spiritual Sustenance,’” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 17, 2008, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3763>.

and wife Robert and Sim Gregory. According to its website, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship seeks to “establish and advance at colleges and universities witnessing communities of students and faculty who follow Jesus as Savior and Lord: growing in love for God, God’s Word, God’s people of every ethnicity and culture and God’s purposes in the world.”¹⁰⁰³ BCF hosts Bible studies, a weekly chapel service, and guest speakers.

In 2010, BCF offered “Come and See,” a five-week Bible study run by Sim Gregory that, in her words, allowed “believers and their friends to ask questions about the Christian faith.”¹⁰⁰⁴ In 2011, BCF hosted its first Veritas Forum, a debate between Scott Sehon, professor of philosophy, and Greg Ganssle, a guest from the Rivendell Institute at Yale University. Sehon and Ganssle debated “What does it mean to be good?”¹⁰⁰⁵ The event was well attended. And Robert Gregory has helped Andrew Hilboldt (Class of 2013) found the Athlete’s Bible Study, “a weekly group open to all members of the Bowdoin community but aimed at athletes and sports fans, which discusses living a Christian life through study of the Bible.”¹⁰⁰⁶

BCF’s relationship to the larger campus is uneasy. In our section on sexuality we reported that when members of the BCF stated their doctrinal rejection of homosexual sex and same-sex marriage they provoked campus rancor. Homosexuality is a fault line in Christianity at Bowdoin. According to former BCF member Jamilah Gregory (Class of 2011), after the heated exchange between students and Robert Gagnon, the visiting theologian from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, many students stopped attending BCF chapel services and Bible studies.¹⁰⁰⁷ Gregory inferred from their conspicuous absence that they either disapproved of Gagnon’s position or were too nervous to return out of fear of being branded “homophobic” by fellow students. Likewise, as discussed, in September 2011, the Office of Multicultural Affairs withdrew funding for chapel speakers in answer to a student protest of comments made by Pastor Sandy Williams. BCF, however, seems to be thriving. As Owen Strachan (Class of 2003) stated in a letter to the editor in the *Orient* responding to reading about the offense taken by students to Williams’s comments: “As a proud graduate of the College, I am thrilled to hear that chapel is taking place in a school founded by evangelical Congregationalists.”¹⁰⁰⁸

We have not found a date at which Jewish students were first admitted to Bowdoin. Nineteenth-century records record no Jewish students, but a religious census-taking in October

¹⁰⁰³“Our Purpose,” InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA, <http://www.intervarsity.org/about/our/our-purpose>.

¹⁰⁰⁴Linda Kinstler, “Christian Presence, New Bible Studies Come to Light,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 19, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5071>.

¹⁰⁰⁵Claire Coltery, “Veritas Forum to Consider What It Means to Be ‘Good,’” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 8, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6284>.

¹⁰⁰⁶Quinn Cohane and Melody Hahm, “Students Value Varied Spiritual Support,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 25, 2013, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7847>.

¹⁰⁰⁷Interview of Jamilah Gregory, (Bowdoin College alumna), November 13, 2011.

¹⁰⁰⁸Owen Strachan, “BCF Sermon Keeps with Historic Teachings,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, September 30, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6608>.

1903 mentions one “Hebrew” student. By 1920–1921, Bowdoin had thirteen “Hebrew” students.¹⁰⁰⁹ Over the following decades, Jewish enrollment grew but remained unorganized:

The Jewish students at Bowdoin for many years never formed their own religion-oriented organization. It was unusual, perhaps, but some Jewish students did share in the [Bowdoin Christian Association] activities, and the B.C.A. had one of its most successful years when it had an ecumenically minded Jewish student, Shepard Lee [Class of 1947], as president.¹⁰¹⁰

That changed in the early 1960s, when a Jewish student was given permission to hold a “ritual Sabbath evening meal and service” in the Moulton Union. When that student graduated the services ended.¹⁰¹¹

In 1970–1971 the Student Activities Committee recorded that Bowdoin’s Interfaith Council was “allotting funds to a Bowdoin Jewish Association.”¹⁰¹² In 2002, the Jewish Association (eventually known as the Bowdoin Jewish Organization) changed its name to Bowdoin Hillel and became affiliated with the national Hillel, “The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.”¹⁰¹³ According to the Hillel website, Bowdoin Hillel “hired Cantor Daniel Leeman,” a spiritual leader, on a part-time basis. Bowdoin Hillel also has two faculty advisors.¹⁰¹⁴ The website lists the group’s activities:

The Hillel offers a wide-ranging schedule of Jewish activities on an otherwise very hectic and secular campus. This includes an extensive Rabbi-led service schedule for the High Holidays on campus (Reform), Shabbat dinners, Sukkah building, club-wide Chinese-food buffet dinners, holiday parties, Jewish movie nights, speakers, and many other events. In affiliation with local synagogues in Bath and Portland (Reform and Conservative, respectively), students teach Hebrew School, tutor B’nai Mitzvah candidates, and participate in community services within the Mid-Coast Maine and Greater Portland areas.¹⁰¹⁵

As of 2005, Bowdoin Hillel listed an undergraduate enrollment of 165 of Jewish students.¹⁰¹⁶ In November 2007 the *Orient* reported that “Bowdoin’s chapter of Hillel is led by 10 board members and has 150 students on its e-mail list. Bowdoin Hillel Treasurer Benjamin Freedman [Class of 2009] estimated that between 10 and 15 students consistently participate in

¹⁰⁰⁹Helmreich, *Religion at Bowdoin*, 128–29.

¹⁰¹⁰*Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁰¹¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹²*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹³“Bowdoin College: Campus Information,” Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, <http://www.hillel.org/HillelApps/JLOC/Campus.aspx?AgencyId=17235>.

¹⁰¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁶*Ibid.*

weekly religious activities.”¹⁰¹⁷ Elizabeth Leiwant (Class of 2008) estimated that “about 100 students attend the Hillel-sponsored Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Passover services.”¹⁰¹⁸

We have been able to learn very little about Bowdoin’s Muslim Students Association. (It is not listed on the national Muslim Students Association’s “Official Affiliated College Chapters List.”)¹⁰¹⁹ Formed in the 2009–2010 academic year,¹⁰²⁰ it sponsors a number of events throughout the year. It cohosted Pakistan Flood Relief Week, for example, with BCF, the Catholic Student Union, and Hillel.¹⁰²¹ The Muslim Students Association joined with the Bowdoin College Republicans and BCF to memorialize 9/11 in September 2010.¹⁰²²

Catholics, like Jews, do not appear in Bowdoin’s nineteenth-century records of student religious affiliations, but the 1903 census lists twelve. In 1920–1921, sixty-nine students identified as Catholic.¹⁰²³ It appears that the first denominational student organization to seek student activity funds at Bowdoin was the Newman Club, a society for Catholic students at secular or non-Catholic universities. During the presidency of Kenneth Sills (1918–1952)—who opposed the establishment of denominational clubs on campus in favor of the Bowdoin Christian Association, a nondenominational Christian group meant to cater to the entire student body—the Newman Club was “centered off campus.”¹⁰²⁴

In 1954, two years after President Sills retired, the club sought permission to establish the Newman Club of Bowdoin College. They were denied permission to establish a club, but were granted limited use of college facilities for the occasional lecture.¹⁰²⁵ In the 1960s, the Newman Club’s status changed and it was able to receive college funds because of the establishment of the Bowdoin Interfaith Council, a group that functions very much like the Student Activities Funding Committee does today by distributing funds to denominational student clubs. Several other religious student groups received college funds, but, according to Helmreich, the Newman Club received “by far the largest amount” of all the denominational student groups. Much of that money was poured into “a project for conducting social service work at the Catholic Mission station at the Indian reservations at Dana Point and later at Pleasant Point.” The practice of

¹⁰¹⁷Angela Fabunan, “Students Celebrate Jewish Life with Hillel,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 30, 2007, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3118>.

¹⁰¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁹“Official Affiliated Chapter List,” 2012-2013 Affiliated Chapter Lists, Muslim Students Association, <http://msanational.org/2012-2013-affiliated-chapters-list/>.

¹⁰²⁰Sasha Davis, “Smith Concludes Fourteen Years at the College,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 30, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5387>.

¹⁰²¹“Tonight the kick-off event for Bowdoin’s Pakistan Flood Relief Week...” *Orient Express*, October 13, 2010, <http://bowdoinorientexpress.com/post/1311230229/tonight-the-kick-off-event-for-bowdoins-pakistan>.

¹⁰²²Linda Kinstler, “Convocation Address Sparks Intellectual Diversity Debate on Campus,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 17, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5514>.

¹⁰²³Helmreich, *Religion at Bowdoin*, 128-29.

¹⁰²⁴*Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁰²⁵*Ibid.*, 154–55.

providing funds for this project ended in 1971 after several faculty members protested that these funds were being used to further “an essentially Catholic mission project.”¹⁰²⁶

In October 1967 the Newman Club also began sponsoring a weekly folk mass held in the student union. The masses were moved to the Chapel in December 1973 and returned to the student union in February 1976.¹⁰²⁷ Writing in 1981, Helmreich noted: “The Newman association with its weekly folk mass, under the professional leadership supplied by the Roman Catholic church, is the most active religious organization on the campus.”¹⁰²⁸ Despite the Newman Club’s former popularity, it no longer exists at Bowdoin. The college now has a Catholic Student Union.¹⁰²⁹ Catholic Student Union co-leader Nathan Miller (Class of 2013) told NAS in an interview in November 2011 that there are about four masses a year that are well attended, but few students attend on a weekly basis.

In 2009, the Catholic Student Union held a highly-publicized *Roe v. Wade* vigil in the Chapel in which a student rang a bell every twenty-seven seconds to signify the frequency of abortions in the United States and to “commemorate the unborn.”¹⁰³⁰ Emily Graham (Class of 2011) objected in the *Orient* to the use of the posters advertising the event because they “prominently displayed a large, color picture of an almost-full-term fetus.” She wrote, “The use of such an in-your-face tactic seemed insensitive protesting a decision that has helped millions of women,” but “[h]oping to glean some understanding from examining the other side of the issue, I went to the Chapel that Wednesday night to experience what I expected to be an attack on the views of so many students on campus.” Graham was surprised by what she found: “The scene in the chapel was quiet, respectful, and incredibly intimate. Only a handful of students sat, reflecting silently, on the benches.”¹⁰³¹ When she asked Robert Flores (Class of 2012), one of the vigil’s organizers, to explain the use of the posters, according to Graham he said

that the Catholic Student Union hoped to reach out to other pro-life students on campus and to present an alternative to the overwhelmingly pro-choice stance on campus. He added that the vigil’s aim was to promote a respect for life, and was not necessarily political in nature. The vigil was held in reverence of the beauty of life...and was not intended to offend those of opposing viewpoints. He said that the posters served not as an accusation, but as an invitation to those with similar beliefs.¹⁰³²

¹⁰²⁶Ibid.

¹⁰²⁷Ibid.

¹⁰²⁸Ibid., 168.

¹⁰²⁹We do not know when the Newman Club disbanded or whether the Catholic Student Union is its direct descendent.

¹⁰³⁰Emily Graham, “Roe v. Wade Vigil Brings Shock, Then Reflection,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 30, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4070>.

¹⁰³¹Ibid.

¹⁰³²Ibid.

After Graham finished offering her olive branch to the Catholic Student Union she chastised her fellow members of the Bowdoin community for being close-minded: “On a campus as ‘liberal’ as Bowdoin’s, students should welcome dissent. We preach open-mindedness, yet we seem predisposed to react to, and be offended by, certain issues. It is easy to call oneself accepting of others’ opinions while surrounded by people who share similar views.”¹⁰³³

Relations between Protestants and Catholics at Bowdoin seem placid. We found one instance of a Protestant student chastising Catholics for what sounds like standard Catholic practices. Writing in the *Orient* in February 2005, Chris Lajoie (Class of 2004) complained that at an Ash Wednesday service held by the Catholic Student Union, Protestant attendees were “not allowed to receive Communion.” Lajoie further complained that the priest who presided over the mass made comments about “the Pope and the Virgin Mary” that were “out of touch...with the spirit of Christian unity that those in the congregation hoped to achieve.”¹⁰³⁴

Alternative religious groups also gather at Bowdoin, but have a less organized presence. Neo-pagans and Wiccans appear to have a very minor following among Bowdoin students. They have no organized groups. The Women’s Resource Center brought a Wiccan speaker to campus in the 1980s and Marilyn Pukkila, a librarian at Colby College who identifies as a “Quaker witch,” gave lectures on witchcraft at Bowdoin in 2003 and 2008. The lectures were sponsored by the departments of Romance languages, sociology and anthropology, and women’s studies.

Buddhism has no official organization at Bowdoin, but has a strong presence in the Counseling Center. Bernie Hershberger, the head of Counseling Services, according to its website, says “his primary approach to counseling is from a Buddhist psychological perspective.”¹⁰³⁵ The Bowdoin Wellness Center likewise has a strong link to Eastern spirituality. It emphasizes, yoga, Tai Chi/Qigong, and various forms of meditation focused on “mind/body/spirit-oriented practices.”¹⁰³⁶

A number of campus religious groups have outside affiliation but are not funded student groups. The Unitarian Universalist Bowdoin Extremely Awesome Religious Society (UU Bears), for example, is linked to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Brunswick.¹⁰³⁷

Circle, founded in fall 2010, is a funded student group that initially had its own advisor, Spiritual Life Intern Nancy Adair, an “ordained interfaith minister through the Chaplaincy

¹⁰³³Ibid.

¹⁰³⁴Chris Lajoie, “Service for Ash Wednesday Disheartening,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, February 11, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/707>.

¹⁰³⁵“Counseling Staff,” Bowdoin College, Counseling Services, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/counseling/staff.shtml>.

¹⁰³⁶“Life Balance,” Bowdoin College, Campus Life, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/campus-life/wellness/index.shtml>.

¹⁰³⁷Luke Lamar, “Are you UU? Does Liberal Religion Interest You?” *Student Digest*, March 5, 2010, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/digests/entry.jsp?timestamp=20100305150245&dow=6&type=student&week=201010&author=llamar>. We have not verified whether UU BEARS still exists. It was active on March 5, 2010, when it posted this notice encouraging a meet-up at the Polar Bear Statue.

Institute of Maine.”¹⁰³⁸ Adair is also a worship leader for the Portland New Church, which is a theological descendant of Swedenborgianism.¹⁰³⁹ She appears to have left her position as a spiritual life intern at Bowdoin and is now the owner of “GoalModel Coaching” and a therapist at Mercy Hospital Recovery Center in Westbrook, Maine.

Coral Sandler (Class of 2012) founded Circle. According to a March 13, 2012, press release in the *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, students in Circle meditate together weekly and “talk about their spiritual lives—covering ground such as dreams, journeying, myths and prayer.”¹⁰⁴⁰ Sandler has designed Circle to be “interfaith” and “has reached out to...student leaders from the Muslim Student Association, Catholic Student Union, Bowdoin Christian Fellowship, Hillel and the new Progressive Christian Group,” who, according to the story, have all participated.¹⁰⁴¹

In an interview with NAS on March 28, 2012, Jennifer Wenz (Class of 2012), a religion major, close friend of Sandler’s, and a participant in Circle, claimed that Bowdoin was considering employing a full-time interfaith chaplain. According to Wenz, Leana Amaez, associate dean of multicultural student programs, was charged with helping to nourish the lives of minority students as well as religious students. In fact, the website for the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs encourages first-year students to contact Amaez “to discuss multicultural or religion-based student programs, or initiatives.”¹⁰⁴² Wenz told NAS that Amaez had felt quite successful in her efforts to support minority students, but had felt less successful in her support of religious students at Bowdoin, simply because she lacked the formal training to do so. This led Amaez, according to Wenz, to consider an interfaith chaplaincy at Bowdoin.

The new position was in fact created in spring 2013. Bowdoin appointed the Rev. Robert Ives (Class of 1969), a minister of the United Church of Christ, to serve as director of religious and spiritual life. Ives earned his Masters of Divinity from the University of Edinburgh.¹⁰⁴³ In a January 2013 *Orient* article, Ives described his goals:

¹⁰³⁸“Rev. Nanci W. Adair at Wilson Chapel,” *Boothbay Register*, August 9, 2012, <http://www.boothbayregister.com/article/rev-nanci-w-adair-wilson-chapel/1618>.

¹⁰³⁹The website for the Portland New Church is currently deactivated. “Swedenborgianism” is a religious movement begun by Swedish theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). Swedenborg claimed to have received a new revelation from Jesus Christ that Christ would sweep away the traditional, historical Church and replace it with a “New Church.” Swedenborgianism was once rigidly sectarian but has since moved towards a religious universalism. The “Mission” of the Portland New Church, for instance, declares that it seeks “to provide a safe place to explore Swedenborgian theology, Christianity, and other spiritual paths” and “to honor the good and truth in all people and all beliefs.”

¹⁰⁴⁰“In a Circle, Bowdoin Students Build Spiritual Community,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, March 13, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2012/03/in-a-circle-bowdoin-students-build-spiritual-community/>.

¹⁰⁴¹This is the only reference we have found to the “Progressive Christian Group,” which is not listed among the funded student groups at Bowdoin.

¹⁰⁴²“Who’s My Dean?” Bowdoin College, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/meet-the-staff/index.shtml>.

¹⁰⁴³Diana Lee, “Ives ’69 Named College’s First Director of Religious and Spiritual Life,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 25, 2013, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7853>.

I think as the director of religious and spiritual life I don't have any desire to be ministering to one faith, but all faiths. I work to celebrate the diversity of religion on the Bowdoin campus and the religious lives of all students.¹⁰⁴⁴

The *Orient* specified Ives's "fourfold" role:

He will act as a coordinator among students of different faith groups, a liaison between students and faith groups throughout Maine, a counselor for individual students, and a chaplain or minister who is able to address the difficulties that the Bowdoin community might experience.¹⁰⁴⁵

In May 2010 *Bowdoin* magazine reprinted remarks that Robert Ives made at the August 2009 memorial service of James Lentz, a former Bowdoin football coach. Ives took the opportunity to describe Lentz's religiosity in pointedly secular language:

I find it a bit ironic that a minister is presiding at Jim's service. You see I don't think Jim darkened the doors of many churches or religious buildings. And yet for me, Jim was a remarkably religious man because he was so full of life, humor, and enthusiasm. He had a deep reverence for work, and reverence for living, all the basic ingredients of the religious life. Jim may never have darkened the door of many churches, but he certainly uplifted and enlightened the lives of those with whom he coached and worked, and certainly lived.¹⁰⁴⁶

Here Ives's précis of religion is indistinguishable from some of the more optimistic forms of secular humanism.

Ives performed his first ceremonial and public role as director of religious and spiritual life on January 21, 2013, when he offered an invocation at a memorial service for Martin Luther King Jr. in the Bowdoin College Chapel.¹⁰⁴⁷

As described in the *Orient*, the idea for the position of director of religious and spiritual life was brought forward by Jennifer Wenz and Coral Sandler, founding members of Circle, who brought their concerns directly to President Mills.¹⁰⁴⁸ According to Wenz, the two explained to Mills that there is "a sense of there being a taboo around spiritual and religious life at Bowdoin." They bemoaned that religious "students are [either] outliers in their spiritual life, or were in the [campus] mainstream and put their spiritual life on hold because it was taboo." They told Mills: "[T]hat's not celebrating their diversity."¹⁰⁴⁹

¹⁰⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁶Robert Ives, "Remembering Jim Lentz," *Bowdoin Magazine* (May 5, 2010), <http://www.bowdoin.edu/magazine/blogs/2010/Jim-Lentz.shtml>.

¹⁰⁴⁷Sophia Cheng, "College Honors MLK, Mills Attends Obama's Second Inauguration," *Bowdoin Orient*, January 25, 2013, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7850>.

¹⁰⁴⁸Lee, "Ives '69 Named College's First Director."

¹⁰⁴⁹Ibid.

Mills met with student representatives of this religious diversity on two separate occasions, from which the position of Director of Religious and Spiritual Life was born.

Allen Delong, director of residential life, expressed delight at the choice of Rev. Robert Ives for the new post: “For me, personally, Bob is so thoughtful.”¹⁰⁵⁰ Delong was particularly excited about Ives’s ability to smooth out conflicts between people with differing beliefs. As Delong put it, Ives would be able to counsel those who are in “conflict with a roommate of a different faith or who may have beliefs that contradict that student’s faith.”¹⁰⁵¹

This is not the only time that Delong has made his thoughts on religion publically known. As discussed, Delong (who hosts the monthly dinner event “Men Who Date Men”) publicly condemned theologian Robert Gagnon as a “wolf-in-sheep’s-clothing” because Gagnon argued that the Bible consistently affirmed the unique dignity and complementarity of heterosexual sex. It appears that Ives passes Delong’s test. A June 18, 2006, *New York Times* article, for example, features an image of Ives performing a “commitment ceremony” at the Union Church in Harpswell, Maine, in which the “partnership” of Richard Moll (former director of admissions at Bowdoin) and Wallace Pinfeld exchanged vows and rings, although they were not legally wed.¹⁰⁵²

Faith and Hatred: An Interview

Being openly religious at Bowdoin can be difficult. “Thomas O’Brien,” a Bowdoin student who has requested that he be quoted anonymously, told Michael Toscano in an interview that his fellow students respond to his Catholic views with disdain:

Toscano: How do your fellow classmates treat your Catholic positions?

O’Brien: I am viewed around here as being a reactionary. I feel silenced. There are certain opinions that I have that I can’t adequately express or talk about without becoming an outcast, and that’s really frustrating. Most of the time, I just don’t say very much on contentious subjects. If you didn’t know me, you would just assume that I was quiet and didn’t have any opinions, which is not at all true. Discussions about abortion, for example—I have the most unpopular opinion about abortion on campus because I am opposed to any instance of abortion. When abortion is brought up, I have to just keep my mouth shut.

Toscano: Do you feel that the efforts to foster true diversity are working?

¹⁰⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁰⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁰⁵²Elizabeth Edwardsen, “Richard Moll and Wallace Pinfeld,” *New York Times*, June 18, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/18/fashion/weddings/18vows.html?_r=0.

O'Brien: No, real diversity fails at Bowdoin. Bowdoin has statistical diversity—geographic, sociological, racial, gender, even religious—it feels diverse. But if it has heterogeneity in its statistical makeup, it is intellectually homogeneous.

Toscano: Can you give me an example where your opinions came up against this “intellectual homogeneity?”

O'Brien: Well, 2009 was a very controversial year for the Catholic Student Union. That year, Maine’s same-sex initiative was being decided by public referendum. Maine has same-day voter registration, so the students were being encouraged to register to vote in Maine and vote “No” in the referendum. [The year prior Governor John Baldacci had signed same-sex marriage into a law. A “No” vote would have upheld the law.] I had absentee voted in Texas—I am a Texan and there were some important issues that I wanted to vote for. I remember it, it was a rainy day. A girl approached me who was helping with a voter drive. I didn’t know her and I never found out her name. She asked me, “Are you going to register to vote and vote ‘no’ in the referendum?” I told her, “I absentee voted in Texas.” She was very upset: “What could be more important than standing up for the right of gay people to marry?” I told her, I would not have voted “No.” She asked me, “What makes you vote against same-sex marriage?” I said, “I guess you could say that I submit to the Catholic Church.” She grew extremely angry, “How can you be part of a group that humiliates women and minorities?” She continued to berate me and accused the Catholic Church of fostering ignorance and hatred throughout its history. She hated me for who I was.

Toscano: How would you change Bowdoin if you could?

O'Brien: How do I engage my schoolmates in a conversation about morals without being treated as a hateful person? I just wish everyone realized that I don’t hate them.¹⁰⁵³

Secularism at Bowdoin

In 1981, Helmreich wrote:

Since its founding the College has gradually shifted to the acceptance of the pronouncement that “Religion is a Private Matter,” one which is not the concern of the College as a corporate entity.¹⁰⁵⁴

Helmreich’s summation remains true. Although, as discussed, Bowdoin provides some support for students who have religious commitments, it mostly stands aside from these matters.

¹⁰⁵³Thomas O’Brien (pseudo., Bowdoin College student), interview with Michael Toscano, November 20, 2011.

¹⁰⁵⁴Helmreich, *Religion at Bowdoin*, 186.

IX. Identity and Race: Being Different

Racial and identity group awareness are a major part of student experience at Bowdoin. Black students are especially marked out as a group. They are the “minority” *par excellence*, the providers of “diversity” for the college as a whole. Their presence on campus, in contrast to all other students, is freighted with special meaning. They represent Bowdoin’s commitment to overcoming the history of oppression and social injustice in America, and they stand individually as synecdoches for this larger narrative. Bowdoin goes to great lengths to recruit black students and to keep them enrolled. The psychological pressures on black students that come as a consequence of these unchosen roles are considerable.

In a subsequent section we examine the nature and degree of racial preferences in admissions, and the academic outcomes in the form of graduation rates. In this section we examine how “difference” plays out in student culture—how the college emphasizes it and how students take it into their own hands.

Everyone is different at Bowdoin, but minority students are *more different* than their white counterparts. Minority students feel this acutely. Writing in the *Orient* in October 2012, Daniel Mejia-Cruz (Class of 2016) said that being at Bowdoin caused “an awareness of my race on a level that I have not before experienced.”¹⁰⁵⁵ According to Mejia-Cruz, not all is well at Bowdoin:

I remember how, during first year orientation, President Mills asked us to consider and talk about the implications of minorities sticking together at meals and social events. As a minority, I don’t feel that I’ve isolated or restricted myself in this way, but I have seen some students of color almost exclusively eating and socializing with other students of color. I understand why. It is instinctual to group together for matters of comfort or even protection—although we must ask, protection from what, especially here at Bowdoin?¹⁰⁵⁶

Mejia-Cruz has not experienced “feelings of isolation, sadness or anger,” which other minorities have. He attributed this to the “College’s inclusive policies, administrative resources (such as the office of the Associate Dean of Multicultural Student Programs), and groups such as LASO [Latin American Student Organization] and AfAm [the African-American Society].”¹⁰⁵⁷

But these “inclusive policies” perhaps most heavily stamp an “awareness” of difference on the experience of student minorities because the administration consistently treats them *differently*. In reaction to the online publication of Mejia-Cruz’s piece, a recent alumnus of Bowdoin who self-identified as “bi-racial” posted an anonymous comment that reveals some of

¹⁰⁵⁵Daniel Mejia-Cruz, “A First Year’s Perspective on Diversity at Bowdoin,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 24, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7578>.

¹⁰⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁷Ibid.

the features of this different treatment.¹⁰⁵⁸ “Anon” grew up in a working-class neighborhood in Boston where his parents “made countless sacrifices” to send him to a private Catholic school. He graduated fourth in a class of two hundred. A fellow student “finished in the bottom 25% of my class.” Both were accepted into Bowdoin. According to “Anon,” the other student “received a Posse scholarship and walked in tuition/board free while I am to this day strapped with debt.” He added:

The problem with my story is that these are the real world experiences that impact how we view race. These personal stories make us bitter, make us question the validity of each student who walks these halls. As long as we continue to identify and quality [*sic*] people as a race there will be a large percentage of people who question and ponder the qualifications of such students.

At the end of the day, a student of color (from the same background and neighborhood) as myself walked away with a free education and five years later I have continued to pay off crippling student debt. Yet, I am expected to completely accept this?¹⁰⁵⁹

Many minority students enter Bowdoin by a different gate than the average Bowdoin student. This also marks them as “different.”

As noted in our section on diversity in admissions, many minority students are brought—all expenses paid—to Bowdoin for special minority recruitment weekends such as Bowdoin Invitational, Explore Bowdoin, and the Experience Weekend. The focused multiculturalism of these weekends seems to provide false expectations for many of the participating students. In April 2012, the *Orient*’s editorial board wrote:

These weekends are undoubtedly effective—many students have said that Experience Weekend played an outsized role in their decision to attend Bowdoin. Yet too often, students arrive on campus in the fall envisioning a higher concentration of the people, events, and ideas they encountered during their visit, and are disappointed.

The College ought to be honest with admitted students that Experience Weekend is a conscious celebration of diversity. Presenting them with a more accurate picture of Bowdoin will better prepare incoming first years for the day they finally move in.¹⁰⁶⁰

And minority students are treated differently by the administration upon entry. Minority students have their own dean, Leana Amaez, the associate dean of multicultural student programs. Minority students also have groups focused on their ethnic background. Minority students sometimes go on retreats to discuss minority status, the Posse Plus Retreat in 2004, for instance, “where they discussed racial issues and the lack of interracial interaction on Bowdoin’s

¹⁰⁵⁸“Anon,” October 26, 2012 (3:46 p.m.), comment on Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁰“Experience Weekend,” editorial, *Bowdoin Orient*, April 20, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7244>.

campus.”¹⁰⁶¹ At the Posse Plus Retreat in 2003 students discussed how they “felt isolated and out of place when they attended colleges and universities with limited diversity.”¹⁰⁶² In February 2010, Wil Smith, former associate dean of multicultural student programs, said that Bowdoin holds a “first-year retreat for multicultural and first-generation college students.”¹⁰⁶³ A November 19, 2010, *Orient* article described the retreat more fully. Students participate in an activity called “Walk the Line” in which they are asked questions like:

- Has someone discriminated against you because of who you are?
- Have you cried on campus?
- Do you believe yourself to be middle class?
- Have you questioned your class status since you came to Bowdoin?¹⁰⁶⁴

Such questions invite students to inspect their lives in search of material that fits with Bowdoin’s preconception of them as bearers of a particular kind of social identity and to discover a sense of grievance (if it isn’t already present) based on this identity. The college’s approach is to make grievance salient and central to the life of the student. The *Orient* reported: “Associate Dean of Student Affairs Leana Amaez, the event’s organizer, estimated that it has been happening every fall for over a decade.”¹⁰⁶⁵

To attend this event students travel to Augusta, Maine, thirty-five minutes from campus, where among the things they learn is that other minorities feel “out of place at Bowdoin.” Donisha Thaxton (Class of 2014) said, “It was nice to hear that I wasn’t alone in feeling sort of out of place at Bowdoin.” Amaez described it more fully:

The idea is that students who are either first-generation college students or from multicultural backgrounds come into Bowdoin and may experience this place in a very different way than students who have perhaps come from a boarding school or from a nearby area. To take them outside of Bowdoin for a day to have them reflect on...who they are in the Bowdoin community and how they experience this community is really impactful.¹⁰⁶⁶

Bowdoin offers many services to minority students that it does not offer to other students. Bowdoin Career Planning provides assistance in obtaining specially reserved academic

¹⁰⁶¹Mario N. Lopez, “Posse Retreats to Discuss Race,” *Bowdoin Orient*, March 5, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-03-05/features04.htm>.

¹⁰⁶²Todd Johnston, “Posse Seeks to Increase Awareness,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 28, 2003, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2003-02-28/news05.htm>.

¹⁰⁶³Nick Daniels, “Newsweek Reports Grad Data with ‘Error,’” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 26, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5111>.

¹⁰⁶⁴Claire Collery, “Multicultural Retreat Reflects on First Year College Transition,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 19, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5827>.

¹⁰⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁶Ibid.

“Opportunities for Underrepresented/Minority/Disadvantaged Students.”¹⁰⁶⁷ Bowdoin has participated since 1992 in a “special academic program,” the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program, established in 1988 and reserved exclusively for minority applicants. The academic experience of a Mellon Mays student is overseen by a faculty advisory committee and faculty mentors.¹⁰⁶⁸ There is no analogue for such an oversight structure of majority students.

Another factor that contributes significantly to the sense of alienation minority students experience at Bowdoin is that the administration feverishly pursues them during the admissions process because they are “underrepresented minorities.” Many of these students performed well in high school—but Bowdoin would not fly a white student from Houston, Texas, to Maine, for instance, because of his academic performance. The free airline tickets are reserved for students who are “underrepresented.” Their “difference” makes Bowdoin eager to pursue them and at the same time transforms that difference into a kind of commodity.

To be “underrepresented” is to be placed in a category with considerable historical baggage. This is a psychologically precarious position for the students, who are entering into an intellectually formative stage. After admission, Bowdoin teaches them that they have been recruited because the college needs to atone for the sins of “Old Bowdoin,” but both “Old Bowdoin” and “New Bowdoin” judge these students by their “difference.” Old Bowdoin would have excluded them because of such difference; New Bowdoin includes them because of it.¹⁰⁶⁹

Because there is so much institutional focus on this one aspect of selfhood, the “difference” is reinforced and becomes a psychological focal point. This is probably why the epithet scrawled on the white board in Coles Tower led to the “I Am Bowdoin” rally, where these differences were asserted over and against bias:

“I am a woman and a Christian Scientist, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am multiracial, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am statistically not supposed to be here, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am a Muslim woman, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a women’s rugby player, and I am Bowdoin.” “I have two passports, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am beautiful, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a feminist, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m a Chicana from LA, and I love you, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am 100 percent Columbian, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am a black woman and I refuse to be put in whatever box society decides they want to throw me in, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m fighting for change, and I am Bowdoin.” “I am Eskimo, and I am Bowdoin.” “I’m black, I’m from the South, and I wear do-rags, and I am Bowdoin.”

¹⁰⁶⁷“Summer Options,” Bowdoin College, Office of Health Professions Advising, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/healthprofessions/summer-options.shtml>.

¹⁰⁶⁸“Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program,” Bowdoin College, Office of Special Academic Programs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/special-academic-programs/scholarships-fellowships/mmuf/index.shtml>.

¹⁰⁶⁹“Old Bowdoin” did in fact admit black students as far back as the 1820s. The number of such students, however, was small and admission was exceptional.

These are foreshortened identities. Students squeeze themselves inside them because Bowdoin encourages and rewards such compression. The encouragement, though well-intentioned, often comes in the form of extracurricular and co-curricular pedagogy.

In spring 2012, for example, Bowdoin held “Beyond the Bowdoin Hello: Ask, Listen, Engage,” an event inaugurated to spur a “dialogue on issues of identity and diversity, both in the classroom and in our wider community.” According to President Mills, it was a week of “lectures, presentations and activities...meant to be a catalyst for continuing a meaningful and sustained conversation about how to unite as a larger community while also celebrating differences.”¹⁰⁷⁰ This event stretched over many days and enjoyed the cosponsorship of the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, the Office of Multicultural Student Programs, residential life, student activities, and most notably the Office of the President as well as several academic departments and programs—Africana studies, gay and lesbian studies, gender and women’s studies, the sociology and anthropology department, the philosophy department—and a number of student-led organizations, including the Bowdoin Student Government.¹⁰⁷¹

Nylea Bivins (Class of 2012), a student leader of “I Am Bowdoin” and the “Student Coordinator of Multicultural Projects,” described the inspiration for Beyond the Bowdoin Hello:

The idea for the event came out of a meeting with President Mills and student leaders [last spring], and we were generating ideas as to how we wanted to engage the community and to talk about identity and difference and privilege and inequality and bias. One student suggested having a day dedicated to talking about all the different topics and issues....The entire group jumped on that and got really excited, and from there we were trying to figure out how to make it happen.¹⁰⁷²

Included in the interactive activities was the “From Global to Local Dinner,” which served “foods from various regions of the United States that have international influence”: “Booyah Stew —> (Belgian),” “Cincinnati Chili —> (Macedonian),” “Sour Dough Bread —> (Ancient Egyptian),” etc. There was the “Privilege Circle”:

Controversial statements are read and participants move closer or farther from a circle according to their personal experiences. This allows participants to become aware of personal privilege associated with race, ethnicity, class, ability, religion, sexuality, country of origin, etc. Ultimately, two circles will be formed and participants will see where they stand in relations to others.¹⁰⁷³

¹⁰⁷⁰Barry Mills, email message to “Students, Faculty, and Staff,” n.d.; forwarded to Michael Toscano, January 24, 2012.

¹⁰⁷¹“Beyond the Bowdoin Hello: Ask, Listen, Engage,” site accessed January 24, 2012. The webpage that fully described this event is no longer available on the Internet. For an involved student’s description of the event, see “Nylea Bivins ’12 on Getting Beyond the Bowdoin Hello,” Bowdoin College, *Campus News*, January 25, 2012, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1bowdoincampus/009143.shtml>.

¹⁰⁷²“Nylea Bivins ’12 On Getting Beyond the Bowdoin Hello,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, January 23, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2012/01/nylea-bivens-12-on-getting-beyond-the-bowdoin-hello/#more-37520>.

¹⁰⁷³“Beyond the Bowdoin Hello.”

And the “Human Barometer”:

Jokes will be read aloud and participants will move from one side of the room to the other based upon their reaction to the joke. Participants will be able to share with the group why they have decided to stand where they are standing. This activity will allow participants to learn from each other about the impact jokes can have on others.¹⁰⁷⁴

Other activities included “Cross the Line,” “Tea Time,” “Dinner with Several Strangers: Beyond the Bowdoin Hello,” a screening of *Not Just a Game*, by David Zirin, and a solo performance by comedian Heather Gold of her original piece about lesbianism, *I Look Like an Egg, But I Identify as a Cookie*.¹⁰⁷⁵

Several guest speakers were also featured, including Tim Wise, whom his website describes as “One of the most brilliant, articulate and courageous critics of white privilege in the nation,”¹⁰⁷⁶ and Steve Wessler, former executive director of the Center for Preventing Hate (which closed in October 2011), an organization whose mission was “to prevent and respond to bias, harassment and violence.” In a 2010 article defending gay marriage, Wessler likened organizations that support traditional marriage to “organized hate groups,” Holocaust deniers, and Social Darwinists.¹⁰⁷⁷

In an email sent to “Students, Faculty, and Staff,” President Mills summarized Beyond the Bowdoin Hello as “a catalyst for continuing a meaningful and sustained conversation about how to unite as a larger community while also celebrating differences.”¹⁰⁷⁸ The “larger community,” however, seems a receding abstraction. The reality is one of ethnic division that the college is at pains to accentuate.

X. Global Citizenship

The term “global citizen” is far from new. The conception goes back to the misanthropic Greek philosopher Diogenes, who, eschewing loyalty to any city-state, declared, “I am a citizen of the world.” The phrase has been taken up every age since by displaced intellectuals, cosmopolitans, and those who strain against the confines of their own time and place. In the last decade or so, however, becoming a “citizen of the world” has gained special purchase in American colleges and universities.¹⁰⁷⁹ This development gained even more momentum with the January 2012 release of a special report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, A

¹⁰⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁷⁵Kate Stern, “Tuesday Performance on Intersectionality—Part of ‘Beyond the Bowdoin Hello,’” *Faculty-Staff Digests*, January 22, 2012, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/digests/entry.jsp?timestamp=20120122114102&dow=1&type=staff&week=201204&author=ksfern>.

¹⁰⁷⁶“About,” Tim Wise: Antiracist Essayist, Author and Educator, <http://www.timwise.org/about/>.

¹⁰⁷⁷“Paper Erred in Giving Voice to Heath,” *Portland Press Herald*, March 17, 2010, http://www.pressherald.com/archive/paper-erred-in-giving-voice-to-heath_2008-04-25.html.

¹⁰⁷⁸Barry Mills, email message to “Students, Faculty, and Staff,” n.d.; forwarded to Michael Toscano, January 24, 2012.

¹⁰⁷⁹Patrick J. Deneen, “An Unbalanced Crucible,” *Academic Questions* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 337–42.

Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy's Future, which strongly advocated colleges to adopt an approach to civics emphasizing “global” citizenship.¹⁰⁸⁰

“Global citizen” and its family of related terms such as “citizen of the world” are, it should be noted, metaphoric phrases. No one can be, literally, a “citizen of the world,” as the “world” is not a polity. “World citizenship” has no defined or agreed upon rights or responsibilities and, despite such institutions as the World Court, no binding law.

Nonetheless, many individuals fancy themselves “citizens of the world.” And the idea has currency in Bowdoin student culture. In this section we examine some of the components of this conceit, starting with the “global” experience of undergraduate students at a small college in rural Maine.

According to the Off-Campus Study Office, “about 230 Bowdoin students study away annually,” which is approximately 13 percent of the student body.¹⁰⁸¹ The Office of Institutional Research lists seventy-two international students, 4 percent of the student body, in residence in fall 2011.¹⁰⁸² That is, more than three times the number of Bowdoin’s domestic American students study abroad than international students make the opposite voyage to Brunswick, Maine. But Bowdoin students are deeply committed to what they either call “global citizenship” or “world citizenship” and see study abroad as part of their initiation into world citizenry.

In the *Bowdoin Globalist*, the Bowdoin chapter of a “student-run network of international affairs magazines,” which released its first issue in February 2012, Senator George Mitchell (Class of 1954) declared:

Today’s highly evolved telecommunication systems have redefined the term “neighbor.” With social media and the constant streaming of information, it is easier to understand who our “neighbors” are and what they are doing. Even though we are more interconnected than ever, it takes time to get used to the reality that our neighbors are no longer just the family down the street, but rather the entire world.¹⁰⁸³

Mitchell’s statement contains the basic conceits of global citizenship.

In 2007, the *Orient*’s editorial board protested that Bowdoin’s reluctance to create a Middle Eastern studies program would damage “its legacy of producing not only fine leaders and diplomats but responsible world citizens.”¹⁰⁸⁴ In September 2011, Benjamin Ziomek (Class of 2013) explained his views on how Bowdoin’s curriculum inculcates global citizenship:

¹⁰⁸⁰The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy's Future* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012), http://www.aacu.org/civic_learning/crucible/documents/crucible_508F.pdf.

¹⁰⁸¹“Off-Campus Study,” Bowdoin College, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ocs/>.

¹⁰⁸²“Answers to Frequently Asked Questions,” Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/faqs.shtml>.

¹⁰⁸³George J. Mitchell Jr., “Dear Readers,” *Bowdoin Globalist*, 1, no. 1 (February 2012): 1, <http://issuu.com/bowdoinglobalist/docs/final?mode=window>.

¹⁰⁸⁴“Language Barrier,” editorial, *Bowdoin Orient*, October 19, 2007, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/2954>.

The emphasis on study abroad and the academic requirement that all students get some exposure to international perspectives cements the school's commitment to global citizenship.¹⁰⁸⁵

In 2009, Caitlin Hurwit (Class of 2012) argued that President Bush's decision to invade Iraq damaged the standing of the United States among the other members of the "global society."¹⁰⁸⁶

This concern of students with becoming global citizens finds some of its roots in the educational vision of President Mills. On April 1, 2010, President Mills published a *Bowdoin Daily Sun* post titled "Barry Mills on Preparing Students for Success in a Global Economy."¹⁰⁸⁷ Mills had no doubt that this was a legitimate goal of education:

The debate about whether any of this is important has been settled. The more difficult question for each institution is how will they define their role and what they will actually do.¹⁰⁸⁸

He asked, "[H]ow do we define our role in preparing students for international and global issues? How do we think about preparing our young people to be leaders and participants in this global community?"¹⁰⁸⁹

Mills described Bowdoin's approach: (1) encourage students to study away in foreign countries, (2) encourage students to master a foreign language, (3) admit international students, (4) incorporate "service learning, community service, and environmental activism into international initiatives," and (5) require students to study the liberal arts. In the end, Mills stated that there isn't "a formula," but that should not stop Bowdoin from trying to accomplish global education:

What are we trying to accomplish here? Clearly, we want our students to be able citizens in a global community... Our goal should be to start these young people on a path where they can acquire the life skills and the knowledge to be able global citizens, and to make sure—to the extent possible—that they do not reach adulthood without the intellectual and emotional capacity to engage effectively in a global society.¹⁰⁹⁰

Another means of creating global citizenship is through the awarding of Global Citizens grants through Bowdoin's Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good. The grant, which provides funds for students to "pursue summer volunteer and public service projects outside of

¹⁰⁸⁵ Benjamin Ziomek, "Shaping Global Leaders Requires a Renewed Focus on Languages," *Bowdoin Orient*, September 30, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6605>.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Caitlin Hurwit, "Obama Ends Age of Empire Building," *Bowdoin Orient*, October 16, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4587>.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Barry Mills, "Barry Mills on Preparing Students for Success in a Global Economy," *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, April 1, 2010, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/2010/04/barry-mills-on-preparing-students-for-the-global-economy/>.

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

the United States,” was awarded to four students in 2008, to six students in 2009, to four students in 2010, and to six students in 2011.¹⁰⁹¹ Despite the immediacy of the work and labor of these projects, their larger purpose is less immanent:

By enabling students to immerse themselves in foreign cultures, the Global Citizens Grant aims to encourage a broadening of perspective among volunteers, the foreign communities in which they will work, and the Bowdoin community to which they will return.¹⁰⁹²

In 2008–2009, Bowdoin convened the faculty Working Group on International Education, chaired by the then director of off-campus study John C. Holt, professor of religion and Asian studies.¹⁰⁹³ In 2009, the working group drafted a “Proposed Statement on International Education at Bowdoin,” which quoted Bowdoin’s canonical document, “A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College,” and drew from it the lesson that “[i]nternational education forms an integral part of a liberal arts education.” The proposed statement provided a vivid image of where Bowdoin stands in relation to the rest of the world:

Bowdoin is mindful of its geographical, social and cultural context: it is a small and privileged college, in a small town, in a lightly populated state exhibiting relatively little racial and ethnic diversity, in a country that at some points in its history has shown little interest in the rest of the world. These characteristics reinforce the need for the intentional pursuit of international education.¹⁰⁹⁴

Most of this material demonstrates the eagerness of the Bowdoin faculty and administration to foster the ideal of global citizenship. We know that students are receptive to these appeals and turn readily to global citizenry as an idiom when talking about their academic horizons and personal aspirations. It is difficult to tell, however, how much this bears on everyday life on campus.

¹⁰⁹¹“Past Global Citizens Grant Recipients,” Bowdoin College, Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good, Fellowships and Beyond, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/mckeen-center/fellowships-beyond/global-citizens-grant/past-gcg-recipients.shtml>.

¹⁰⁹²“Global Citizens Grant,” Bowdoin College, Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good, Fellowships and Beyond, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/mckeen-center/fellowships-beyond/global-citizens-grant/index.shtml>.

¹⁰⁹³“Faculty Committees for 2008–09,” Bowdoin College, Academic Governance, Faculty Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/faculty-governance/pdf/committee%20assignments%2008-09.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Attached to the May 18, 2009, Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 2, folder 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

Chapter 6

Student Learning

We have examined Bowdoin’s history, its academic program, key concepts, and student culture. In this section we consider several other aspects of a Bowdoin education that together present a picture of how Bowdoin students are engaged academically by the college. Bowdoin prides itself on teaching students to be “critical thinkers.” Its success in achieving this goal, however, is very difficult to gauge.

Bowdoin, to our knowledge, has not made use of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), a test that measures how far undergraduate students have progressed in “critical thinking” and related skills over their four-year education. The CLA drew considerable national attention in 2011 with the publication of *Academically Adrift*, a study by the sociologists Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, which demonstrated that at a wide variety of colleges, including elite institutions, roughly a third of college seniors showed no progress in critical thinking and related skills over the level at which they began as freshmen.¹⁰⁹⁵ Another third of seniors showed marginal gains, roughly equal to the advances expected from the freshman to the sophomore year of college.

Many in higher education were not happy with the publicity that *Academically Adrift* received and the study has been criticized for various flaws, but the CLA remains the only well-established measure of whether colleges that promote “critical thinking” as a central goal of liberal arts education actually achieve much success.¹⁰⁹⁶ Arum and Roksa did not name the colleges they studied and, again, we do not know whether Bowdoin has ever used the CLA. If it has, it has not said so publicly or released the results.

On the other hand, Bowdoin has—with Bates College, Colby College, Middlebury College, Trinity College, Smith College, Wellesley College, and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges—formed the New England Consortium on Assessment and Student Learning. Some of the stated goals of the consortium include:

- Better understand students’ transition from high school to college
- Explore student learning in relation to institutional practices
- Better understand how students make important academic and social decisions to inform teaching and build cultures of inquiry

¹⁰⁹⁵Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁹⁶Among the critics are Alexander W. Astin, “In ‘Academically Adrift,’ Data Don’t Back Up Sweeping Claim,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 14, 2011, and Michelle Flinchbaugh, “Is ‘Academically Adrift’ Adrift?” *Faculty Voice*, February 28, 2011, <http://imerrill.umd.edu/facultyvoice1/2011/02/28/review-is-academically-adrift-adrift/>. Pushback against the Collegiate Learning Assessment has included, for example, a resolution passed in March 2009 by the Academic Senate of the California State University at Chico denouncing the “appropriateness” of the test, http://www.csuchico.edu/fs/supporting_docs_as/Mar%2012.%202009/CLA%20Resolution%203-12-09.pdf.

The consortium's findings have not been made publicly available.¹⁰⁹⁷

Absent that kind of data, we have focused on a variety of indirect indications, including Bowdoin's "selectivity," what Bowdoin students major and minor in, acceptance and graduation rates, and the ways that Bowdoin frames its expectations of what students will actually learn. None of this tells us precisely what Bowdoin students learn or the magnitude of their intellectual accomplishments, but the material we have assembled in these sections does bear strongly on what Bowdoin *teaches*. Part of what it teaches its students is its own expectations of how they engage Bowdoin's academic programs and what should count as personal "success" when they do.

I. Bowdoin's Selectivity

Bowdoin students are highly conscious that they attend a "selective college." It is a point of pride and, in some contexts, a rationalization for what students actually study. When Tom Klingenstein and Peter Wood spoke with Bowdoin students on May 16, 2011, they noted what seemed to be gaps in the curriculum. Several Bowdoin students responded that they had no need to study subjects such as general American history or Western history because virtually all Bowdoin students had covered these topics in high school. One student challenged Klingenstein and Wood, saying, "Tell me what it is I don't know." Other students reinforced the point that Bowdoin students are generally so bright and so well-prepared before they begin college studies they do not need a curriculum that covers anything in particular—especially topics that would be considered "foundational."

This attitude might be criticized from several perspectives, but our point is simply that Bowdoin cultivates this attitude among its students. "Selectivity" is not merely a descriptive term referring to an aspect of the admissions process. It is also part of the self-esteem of Bowdoin students and is strongly connected to their collective intellectual identity. There is, of course, an elective affinity between the college and the students on this matter. Many Bowdoin students grow up aspiring to attend a "selective college," and Bowdoin markets itself to students who have such aspirations.¹⁰⁹⁸

But this, in turn, means that Bowdoin's "selectivity" is a key aspect of student learning and one that deserves close attention.

Bowdoin publicly characterizes itself as "highly selective." In fact, it has become much more selective in recent years. The Class of 2016, for instance, was selected from the largest applicant pool in Bowdoin's history. Of the 6,716 applicants, Bowdoin accepted 1,060 or 15.8 percent. Of those accepted 492 matriculated, for a yield of 46.4 percent.¹⁰⁹⁹ "Selectivity" in this

¹⁰⁹⁷Bowdoin College, *New England Association of Schools and Colleges Fifth Year Report* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2011), 9.

¹⁰⁹⁸"Bowdoin is first and foremost an institution dedicated to the life of the mind, and the mandate to the admissions staff is to bring to the community students who will use the College's intellectual resources most fully and effectively." *The Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2006), 61.

¹⁰⁹⁹"Admissions," Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/admissions.shtml>.

sense is a major component of *U.S. News & World Report's* widely noted college rankings, which currently puts Bowdoin as tied for sixth place with Wellesley College among “national liberal arts colleges.”¹¹⁰⁰ Bowdoin’s selectivity of 15.8 percent makes it the fifth most selective of the top ten colleges in the *U.S. News & World Report* list.

Figure 43: Selectivity (%) of *U.S. News & World Report's* “Top Ten National Liberal Arts Colleges,” Fall 2011¹¹⁰¹

College	Selectivity (%)
Williams	17.3
Amherst	13.3
Swarthmore	15.1
Middlebury	18.3
Pomona	14.0
Bowdoin	16.1
Wellesley	30.9
Carleton	31.0
Haverford	25.1
Claremont McKenna	14.1

In its 2006 *Self-Study*, Bowdoin reported a sharp drop in applications in the late 1990s, followed by a substantial rise in the early 2000s:

Bowdoin saw an application decline from 4,435 in 1996 to 3,821 two years later. From 2003 on, however, applications rose every year, exceeding 5,000 last year for the first time in its 200-year history and rising 7.5% to a record 5,401 in the admissions cycle just completed. While the average admission rate from 1997 to 1999 was 32%, this dropped to just over 24% for the five years beginning in 2001, and decreased to an all time low of 21.6% this past year.¹¹⁰²

The sudden drop in applications followed Bowdoin’s decision to close its fraternities, though the 2006 *Self-Study* does not offer any cause-and-effect analysis. Likewise, the 2006 *Self-Study* does not offer much explanation of why the pool of applicants increased so rapidly from 2003 onward. It merely notes, “Bowdoin’s increased visibility and higher selectivity have drawn more top students into the applicant pool.”¹¹⁰³

¹¹⁰⁰“National Liberal Arts College Rankings,” *U.S. News & World Report*, <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-liberal-arts-colleges>.

¹¹⁰¹The *U.S. News & World Report* figure for Bowdoin’s selectivity (16.1) differs from the number cited in our text (15.8) because it refers to Fall 2011. The latter number is based on Fall 2012 data.

¹¹⁰²*Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006*, 59.

¹¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 61.

“Selectivity” is to a great extent a measure of marketing success. The focus on “selectivity” suggests that a college that is more selective attracts brighter or better students than one that is less selective. This is not necessarily the case. Bowdoin does succeed in matriculating many bright students, but its “selectivity” refers only to the contrast between offers of admission and its general pool of applicants, whose overall academic quality is unknown to us.

Another measure of the quality of entering classes is the number of National Merit Scholars recruits. Bowdoin’s yield of National Merit Scholars has been trending upward for the last decade.

Figure 44: National Merit Scholars Matriculated to Bowdoin, Available Years, 2000–2011¹¹⁰⁴

Year	Number of Students
2000	22
2001	25
2002	19
2003	23
2004	26
2005	24
2006	40
2007	29
2008	33
2009	35
2010	52
2011	33

The large majority of National Merit Scholars that Bowdoin matriculates are recruited with the help of financial incentives. Of the thirty-three scholars who matriculated to Bowdoin in 2011, twenty-five were “sponsored” by the college. In 2001, it sponsored eighteen of twenty-five; in 2007, it sponsored twenty-three of twenty-nine; in 2008, it sponsored twenty-nine of thirty-three.¹¹⁰⁵ “Sponsorship,” according to the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, means that the college awards scholarships to individuals who qualified as “finalists” in the national competition.¹¹⁰⁶ Bowdoin offers all National Merit Scholars who apply to the college a “one-time

¹¹⁰⁴Various sources: speeches by President Mills, annual reports from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. There are discrepancies. The number of National Merit Scholars Bowdoin reports that it has matriculated sometimes conflict with outside reporting. In such instances we have followed the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. Bowdoin’s 2006 *Self-Study*, for example, claims the number for 2006 is thirty-nine. We followed the number reported by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation and reprinted in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

¹¹⁰⁵“Colleges with Most Freshman Merit Scholars, 2008,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 24, 2009, <http://chronicle.com/article/Colleges-With-the-Most/47999/>.

¹¹⁰⁶“The 193 higher education institutions that provided Merit Scholarship awards in 2012 range from small private colleges to flagship state universities, and they all share the ability to attract National Merit Program Finalists to their campuses. NMSC provides college sponsors with lists of Finalists who have selected their institutions as first choice; college officials then choose the winners of their institutions’ awards.” National Merit Scholarship Corporation, *Allegiance and Support: National Merit Scholarship Corporation 2011–12 Annual Report* (Evanston, IL: NMCS, 2012), 31, http://www.nationalmerit.org/annual_report.pdf.

\$2,500 award.”¹¹⁰⁷ Bowdoin also has another merit-based scholarship program, the Bowdoin Faculty Scholarship Program, which offers one hundred accepted students a stipend of \$3,000 “to pursue non-credit-bearing enrichment opportunities such as research, independent study, career-related internship, and service learning or community engagement.”¹¹⁰⁸

The pursuit of National Merit Scholars is itself part of the national competition among colleges and universities for academic prestige. Some colleges and universities have invested heavily in “sponsoring” National Merit Scholars, and have done so over a span of decades.¹¹⁰⁹ In recent years a debate has opened up among advocates of reserving financial aid exclusively for students in financial need, and in light of this some universities have discontinued “merit” scholarships.¹¹¹⁰ Bowdoin, taking note of the controversy, has continued its “merit-based” scholarship programs while publicly regretting that it needs to do so. Bowdoin blames other institutions for creating the circumstances in which colleges have to compete with financial awards for the brightest students. In a 2004 interview President Mills explained:

It’s a program that is in many respects required because of the competitive nature of admissions. I would prefer that we didn’t have to do it, but the reality of the world is that we have to put ourselves in a position to compete for these students.¹¹¹¹

In May 2004 the *Orient* editorialized against merit scholarships—“On Unequal Footing”—and cited an interview on the Bowdoin Cable Network in which President Mills admitted when “pressed” that “Bowdoin has been giving merit-based scholarships for the last two years.”¹¹¹²

Bowdoin’s view of itself as a college that aims to attract academic high-achievers, however, is in tension with several of its other policies. Bowdoin was the first college in the United States to make the SAT and ACT optional (“test-optional”), a policy it adopted in 1969. That policy did not deter individuals who have high scores on the SAT from reporting them to Bowdoin, but it left the door open for Bowdoin to consider other applicants whose low SAT scores might have been an obstacle to admission.

Bowdoin in fact buys from the College Board and ACT Inc. the names and addresses of high school students who have high scores on the SAT and the ACT in order to recruit them. The

¹¹⁰⁷“Frequently Asked Questions,” Bowdoin College, Parents & Prospective Students, Student Aid, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaid/prospective-students/faq.shtml>.

¹¹⁰⁸“Bowdoin Faculty Scholarship,” Bowdoin College, Office of Special Academic Programs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/special-academic-programs/scholarships-fellowships/bowdoin-faculty-scholarship.shtml>.

¹¹⁰⁹Robin Wilson, “Some Colleges Spend Millions on Merit Scholarships,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 1, 1991, <http://chronicle.com/article/Some-Colleges-Spend-Millions/86612/>.

¹¹¹⁰Elyse Ashburn, “U. of Texas at Austin Won’t Sponsor National Merit Scholars Anymore,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 1, 2009; Janet Lorin, “NYU Exiting National Merit Scholarship,” *Bloomberg News*, October 21, 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-10-21/nyu-exiting-national-merit-scholarship-citing-test-process.html>.

¹¹¹¹Haley S. Bridger, “Merit-Based Scholarship Questioned,” *Bowdoin Orient*, May 7, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/25>.

¹¹¹²“On Unequal Footing,” editorial, *Bowdoin Orient*, May 7, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/29>.

college is thus not particularly skeptical about the validity of these standardized tests to predict which students have exceptionally high aptitude and readiness for college. Rather, Bowdoin uses these tests as one of its tools to target high achievers. As Leon Botstein, president of Bard College, put it in 2011, “They take a stance that looks principled but is strategic. They say ‘I’m going to show myself to be open,’ but in reality they are completely buying into the definition of a good student that is guided by the test.”¹¹¹³

But Bowdoin’s pursuit of academic selectivity is also in tension with its pursuit of “diversity,” (i.e., racial diversity). On this topic we run up against Bowdoin’s determination to conceal the magnitude of the “preferences” it extends to members of some ethnic groups and the resulting disparities in admissions standards. Those preferences and disparities, however, are very large. The primary evidence of this is acceptance rates. In the case of the acceptance rate of blacks, it is often “about double the rate” of Bowdoin’s overall acceptance rate.

It is unclear whether Bowdoin students know much about the “achievement gap” in academic performance among American students. The term refers to the large statistical differences among students from various ethnic groups on standardized test scores, grade point averages, school and college completion rates, and more. The achievement gap has been closely studied for generations and has been the target of innumerable interventions in K-12 schools and colleges. Yet it persists. Moreover the achievement gap is not small. One conventional measure is SAT scores. For example, in 1996–1997, the nationwide SAT Math and Verbal scores averaged by racial group were:

Figure 45: SAT Math and Verbal Scores Nationally Averaged by Racial Group, 1996–1997

	White	Black	Mexican American	Puerto Rican	Other Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Other
Math	526	423	458	447	468	560	475	514
Critical Reading	526	434	451	454	466	479	471	480

Source: “Fast Facts: SAT Scores,” National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=171>, taken from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2011* (NCES 2012-001).

According to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* in 2005, the achievement gap as measured by the SAT had worsened:

Despite the small overall improvement of black SAT scores over the past 17 years, *the gap between black and white scores has actually increased*. In 1988 the average combined score for whites of 1036 was 189 points higher than the average score for blacks. In 2005 the gap between the average white score and the average black score had grown to 204 points.

¹¹¹³Janet Lorin, “Bowdoin Says No Need for SAT While Buying College Board Scores,” *Bloomberg News*, July 19, 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-07-19/bowdoin-says-no-need-for-sat-while-buying-college-board-scores.html>.

Not only are African-American scores on the SAT far below the scores of whites and Asian Americans, but they also trail the scores of every other major ethnic group in the United States including students of Puerto Rican and Mexican backgrounds. In fact, American Indian and Alaska Native students on average score more than 104 points higher than the average score of black students. On average, Asian American students score 227 points, or 19 percent higher, higher than African Americans.¹¹¹⁴ (emphasis in original)

The aggregate achievement gap tells only a small part of the story. When cohorts are divided into segments representing gradations of achievement from “high” to “low,” the disparities are even more dramatic. The National Study of College Experience, for example, found that among students scoring in the top range on the SATs, with scores between 1500 and 1600, the achievement gap appeared as follows:

Figure 46: Percentage of “Top Range” SAT Scores Nationally by Racial Group

White (%)	Black (%)	Hispanic (%)	Asian (%)
8.9	0.9	4.2	21.7

That is, 8.9 percent of white students scored in the top tier, 0.9 percent of black students did, etc.¹¹¹⁵

In September 2011, the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* cited a report produced by the College Board that measured the percentage of students from different ethnic categories who were “ready for college-level instruction.” The College Board “set the benchmark score at 1550 on the combined reading, mathematics and writing SAT.” It found:

Figure 47: Percentage of SAT Takers Nationally Achieving SAT Benchmark

Ethnicity	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian/ Asian American/ Pacific Islander	Black/ African American	Hispanic/Latino	White	Other
College-Ready (%)	34	59	15	23	53	43

Source: College Board Data reprinted in “Study Shows Only 15 Percent of African-American SAT Test Takers Are Well Prepared for College,” *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, Research and Studies, September 28, 2011, <http://www.jbhe.com/2011/09/study-shows-only-15-percent-of-african-american-sat-test-takers-are-well-prepared-for-college/>.

We glance at these statistics only to establish context for Bowdoin’s race-conscious admissions policies, which plainly offer admission to minority students whose qualifications are significantly lower than whites and Asians. The statistics also strongly suggest that Asians

¹¹¹⁴“The Widening Racial Scoring Gap on the SAT College Admissions Test,” *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, Features, 2005 http://www.jbhe.com/features/49_college_admissions-test.html.

¹¹¹⁵In Thomas J. Espenshade and Alexandria Walton Radford, *No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal: Race and Class in Elite College Admissions and Campus Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 135.

matriculate to Bowdoin at much lower numbers than would be expected if the college's admissions decisions were guided primarily by attention to intellectual aptitude and achievement. In 2011, for example, only 5.8 percent of the matriculated students (twenty-eight out of 483 students) were Asian.¹¹¹⁶

Black students are singled out for highly disparate treatment beginning with recruitment and acceptance.¹¹¹⁷

Figure 48: Bowdoin's Overall Acceptance Rate vs. Acceptance Rate of Blacks (%), 2005–2011

First-Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Overall Acceptance Rate (%)	24.5	21.6	19.0	18.5	19.4	19.7	16.1
Black Acceptance Rate (%)	46.3	41.3	41.3	44.3	N/A	*40.0	35.1

Source: The data in the row "Overall Acceptance Rate" is reported by Bowdoin's Office of Institutional Research. The row "Acceptance Rate of Blacks" is reported by the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, "The JBHE Annual Survey: Black First-Year Students at the Nation's Leading Liberal Arts Colleges." *The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* notes that the rate of black acceptance at Bowdoin is "about double the rate" of overall acceptance rate.

The disparity is echoed in Bowdoin's six-year graduation rate, which we found in another source that breaks the rate down among five ethnic categories:

Figure 49: Bowdoin's 2010 Six-Year Graduation Rate (%) by Race/Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Six-Year Graduation Rate (%)
Asian	92.1
Black	84.6
Latino	90.3
Native American	87.5
White	94.2

Source: Graduation-rate data was compiled by College Results Online from data "collected by U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)," through IPEDS.

The same source offers a summary account that distinguishes "Non-underrepresented" and "underrepresented" minorities. This opaque term "non-underrepresented minority" refers to "the percent of FTE [full-time equivalent] undergraduates who are White or Asian."¹¹¹⁸

¹¹¹⁶Bowdoin's Common Data Set 2011–2012, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/images/cds2011-12.pdf>.

¹¹¹⁷Other racial and ethnic minorities may also receive disparate treatment in admissions. We have no recent data bearing on this possibility.

¹¹¹⁸"About the Data," College Results Online, <http://www.collegeresults.org/aboutthedata.aspx>.

Figure 50: Bowdoin’s 2010 Six-Year Graduation Rate (%) by “Representation”

Representation Status	Six-Year Graduation Rate (%)
Non-Underrepresented Minority	93.9
Underrepresented Minority	87.7
Overall	93.0
<i>Source:</i> About the Data,” College Results Online, http://www.collegeresults.org/aboutthedata.aspx .	

Bowdoin administrators are plainly aware of the magnitude of racial preferences in the college’s admissions. They see these preferences as necessary to achieve Bowdoin’s goal of having substantial racial and ethnic “diversity” in the student body. “Selectivity” and “diversity” thus tug in different directions and the college attempts to give each its due. As the 2006 *Self-Study* put it, “By all objective measures, the academic quality of Bowdoin students has improved, even as the College has become more diverse, with increasing numbers of students from less-advantaged backgrounds—socio-economically and educationally.”¹¹¹⁹

The use of racial preferences in college admissions is fraught with moral complications, of which perhaps the most pressing is the often negative consequences of preferences to those who receive them. In their 2012 book *Mismatch: How Affirmative Action Hurts Students It’s Intended to Help, and Why Universities Won’t Admit It*, UCLA law professor Richard Sander and Brookings Institution senior fellow Stuart Taylor provide a data-rich analysis of how students’ academic performance is impeded by being admitted to the low end of the achievement spectrum in a college and enhanced by being admitted to an institution where their abilities are average or above.¹¹²⁰ To our knowledge, Bowdoin has never pursued a substantial discussion of the drawbacks of racial preferences in its admissions policies. But in presenting itself as a “highly selective” college and at the same time pursuing a policy of admitting students by race with markedly lower admissions standards for “underrepresented minorities,” Bowdoin shapes a peculiar dynamic for student learning. Bowdoin students learn that some important subjects *cannot be discussed* or can be referred to only through an idiom of ideological assertion such as was displayed in the “I Am Bowdoin” rally.

II. What Students Study

In a previous section we examined in detail Bowdoin’s academic requirements, majors, and course offerings. In this section we examine how students respond to the academic opportunities Bowdoin presents.

For at least the last five years, the most popular major at Bowdoin has been government

¹¹¹⁹Bowdoin College *Self-Study* 2006, 61.

¹¹²⁰Richard Sander and Stuart Taylor Jr., *Mismatch: How Affirmative Action Hurts Students It’s Intended to Help, and Why Universities Won’t Admit It* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

and legal studies. Economics has consistently been second. Bowdoin's Office of Institutional Research lists the five most popular majors of graduates from 2008 to 2012:

Figure 51: Bowdoin's Five Most Popular Majors of Graduates, 2008–2012

2008: (1) Government, (2) Economics, (3) English, (4) History, (5) Psychology

2009: (1) Government, (2) Economics, (3) History, (4) English, (5) Psychology

2010: (1) Government, (2) Economics, (3) English, (4) Biology, (5) History

2011: (1) Government, (2) Economics, (3) Biology, (4) Environmental Studies, (5) History

2012: (1) Government, (2) Economics, (3) Biology, (4) History, (5) English¹¹²¹

The popularity of the government and economics majors is notable, among other reasons, for the more traditional academic character of these two departments and their course offerings. Neither department can be fairly characterized as rooted in a single perspective. In fall 2012, the economics department offered courses ranging from “Financial Analysis” to “Marxian Political Economy.” Likewise in fall 2012, the government and legal studies department offered courses ranging from “Introduction to American Government” to “Comparative Environmental Politics.”

History and English, which also number among the most popular majors, by contrast, offered a miscellany of conspicuously nontraditional courses with fairly strong ideological overtones. The fall 2012 offerings of the history department included “Utopia: Intentional Communities in America, 1630–1997,” “Globalizing India,” “The Sexual Life of Colonialism: Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial World,” “Entering Modernity: European Jewry,” “Beyond Capoeira: History and Politics of Afro-Brazilian Culture,” “Food and Power in American History,” “Dictatorship, Human Rights, and Memory in Latin America,” “Comparative Slavery and Emancipation,” and “Colonial Latin America.” A few—and only a few—more traditional-sounding courses were part of the mix: “Ancient Rome,” “The Civil War Era,” and a survey course on nineteenth-century European history.

In fall 2012, the offerings of the English department included “Fan Fictions and Cult Classics,” “Queer Gardens,” “Interracial Narratives,” “Telling Environmental Stories,” “Sex and the Word,” “Of Comics and Culture,” and “Cosmopolitanism and Creaturely Life,” along with a handful of courses on authors such as Hawthorne, Chaucer, and Shakespeare.

Most students fulfill Bowdoin's requirement that they complete a major but do not go beyond the “single major” to take advantage of other options such as “coordinate majors” and “double majors.” Almost half of Bowdoin students take a minor as well as a major. On the whole, this pattern represents an endorsement by the students of the principle recommended by Bowdoin that they balance “depth” (the major) with “breadth” (electives and non-major requirements). But about a third of Bowdoin students opt for the greater specialization implied in coordinate and double majors.

¹¹²¹“Graduates,” Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/graduates2012.shtml>.

Figure 52: Bowdoin's Class of 2012, Types of Majors

2012 Graduates	Total	Total Grads (%)	Major Type with a Minor	Major Type with a Minor (%)	Major Type w/out a Minor	Major Type w/out a Minor (%)
Single Majors	305	67.5	213	69.8	92	30.2
Coordinate Majors	31	6.9	14	45.2	17	54.8
Double Majors	115	25.4	31	27.0	84	73.0
Double-Coordinate Major	1	00.2	0	00.0	1	100.0
Totals and Percentages	452	100.0	258	57.1	194	42.9

Source: "Graduates," Bowdoin College, Office of Institutional Research, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/graduates2012.shtml>.

The structure of a college curriculum teaches students some lessons beyond its content. Especially in the absence of a governing intellectual framework or a core curriculum, it provides the college's most authoritative map of human knowledge and specifies the possible ways the pieces can be fit together.

The Class of 2012 divided as follows: 36.5 percent (165 out of 452 of students) majored in the humanities/fine arts, 23.2 percent (105 students) majored in the natural sciences/math, 44.5 percent (201 students) majored in social/behavioral sciences, and 28.5 percent (129 students) majored in interdisciplinary fields. (See appendix VIII for details.)¹¹²² There are prominent differences between male and female students in the choice of majors.

Figure 53: Bowdoin Majors by Academic Division and by Gender of Students, Class of 2012, Showing Percentage of Gender Cohort and Percentage of Division Cohort

	Humanities/ Fine Arts	Natural Sciences/ Math	Social/Behavioral Sciences	Interdisciplinary
Men	62	65	123	43
% of All Male Students	28	29.4	55.7	19.5
% of All Division Majors	37.5	61.9	61.1	33.3
Women	103	40	78	86
% of All Female Students	44.6	17.3	33.8	37.2
% of All Division Majors	62.4	38	38.8	66.6
Total	165	105	201	129
% of All Division Majors	36.5	23.2	44.5	28.5

¹¹²²Appendix VIII, "The Class of 2012, Declared Majors," is available on the National Association of Scholars website, http://www.nas.org/projects/the_bowdoin_project/appendices.

Significant gender disparities exist in every category. The largest occur in interdisciplinary studies, where twice as many women as men complete their majors. There were also some large disparities between men and women in the two most popular majors: in Bowdoin's Class of 2012, fifty-six men and thirty-three women majored in government, and fifty-two men and thirteen women majored in economics.

Such patterns are not just statistical artifacts. They show up in the everyday experience of students and inevitably teach students some lessons about the intellectual affinities of men and women.

III. Critical Thinking

Bowdoin's October 2011 *Fifth Year Report* contains a brief description of Bowdoin's attempts to measure the growth of critical thinking skills in its students from their freshman through their senior year. The statement shows, on the one hand, Bowdoin's self-assuredness that its students grow vastly in critical thinking skills while at Bowdoin, but, on the other hand, they have no actual way of measuring this:

Bowdoin is also part of a number of other collaborative or consortia assessment projects. In the spring of 2010, as part of a National Science Foundation funded pilot study, Bowdoin administered a Critical Thinking test, known as the CAT, to 100 students—both first year students and seniors. Bowdoin first year students scored significantly higher than seniors at the national level (25.93 vs. 19.04). This raises the possibility of “ceiling effects” for this test. That is, our first-year students scored so much higher than upper division students on the national level, the test may simply not tell us much about our students. Bowdoin seniors had slightly higher scores and also scored well above the national norm. The lack of variation between first-year scores and senior scores does not necessarily mean that students do not improve in their critical thinking skills while at Bowdoin, but rather that the test is not sufficiently challenging for our students (who enter with very high SATS and academic profiles).¹¹²³

Bowdoin chooses to interpret the “lack of variation” as the shortcomings of the exam. This is something, however, Bowdoin simply cannot verify.

IV. Intellectual Life

American college students often complain about the quality of intellectual life on their campuses. This may be no more than the curing of unrealistic expectations. Colleges have never been exclusively focused on the life of the mind and a substantial portion of students on every campus are more interested in social life, the arts, sports, and entertainment than they are on the adventurous pursuit of ideas. Bowdoin is no exception.

¹¹²³Bowdoin College, *New England Association of Schools and Colleges Fifth Year Report* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2011), 9.

Bowdoin, however, is heavily invested in the idea of the college as an intellectual community and the gap between that ideal and the everyday reality seems to vex quite a few students and faculty. Various explanations have been put forward as to why Bowdoin students engage insufficiently in what the critics judge to be a shared life of the mind. Former dean for academic affairs Craig McEwen—who, as mentioned above, helped craft “A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College” and led Bowdoin in the adoption of the 2004 distribution requirements—writing in 1996, attributed the situation to the campus residential arrangements. As he explained in Bowdoin’s 1996 *Self-Study*:

[H]ere at Bowdoin there is a nagging but universal concern among students and faculty that intellectual life receives insufficient nourishment from the forms and structures of the residential community.¹¹²⁴

McEwen recommended that Bowdoin develop a “long-range plan” for a new residential life system. This recommendation eventuated in closing the fraternities—a move Bowdoin hoped would provide greater possibility for the flourishing of intellectual community. The fraternities, of course, have long since closed while the problem of limited intellectual community on campus continues.

Also writing in the 1996 *Self-Study*, on the other hand, Paul Franco, professor of government—who in 2003 suggested that his colleagues were unjustifiably dismissing the problem of curricular politicization—blamed the lack of intellectual community on the “paucity of shared curricular experience.”¹¹²⁵ Franco reported,

In the original focus groups which served as the basis for defining the broad theme of this self-study, many faculty and students spoke of the relative lack of intellectual community at Bowdoin

and asked:

Might not Bowdoin do more in this direction, either by sponsoring more lectures of general interest, organizing symposia on controversial issues, or even by instituting “core” courses?¹¹²⁶

Bowdoin has not instituted core courses. It did, however, establish a formal series of events, titled “Symposium,” and in 1999 revived the “Common Hour,” described below, which is held every other Friday from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.¹¹²⁷

¹¹²⁴*The Bowdoin College Self-Study 1996*, 68, catalog no. 1.29, folders 10–30, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 105.

¹¹²⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹²⁷“Common Hour Statement of Purpose,” Bowdoin College, Common Hour, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/common-hour/purpose/index.shtml>.

To what degree these events have broadened or intensified *students'* intellectual community is difficult to say, but Bowdoin holds many symposia throughout the academic year. The college takes pride in the symposia as “an increasingly important part of the educational enterprise at Bowdoin,” and sees them as “attracting a wide range of scholars and artists to campus.”¹¹²⁸ We have not found a comprehensive list of the symposia, but, of the twenty-nine we identified, seventeen were sponsored or cosponsored by various “studies” centers, and four were sponsored by the Multicultural Affairs Program, the McKeen Center for the Common Good, and the Wabanaki-Bates-Bowdoin-Colby Collaborative. Seven of the symposia focus on topics in the natural sciences. The general flavor of the symposia is the promotion of multidisciplinary studies. Eight of the symposia have environmental themes, eleven have multiculturalist themes, six focus on women, three on class, and five focus on traditional academic disciplines.

The symposia by and large continue the intellectual emphases already present in the curriculum and the Bowdoin administration’s oft-stated educational priorities. From this perspective, the symposia appear to provide Bowdoin students the opportunity to become more deeply informed about familiar themes. The symposia appear rarely to venture into intellectual controversies beyond this sphere. We do not know how many students (or faculty members) generally attend such symposia, but from the occasional photographs of the events that appear in the Bowdoin press, the symposia appear to attract audiences in the dozens, not the hundreds.

The college nonetheless rates them as important. Cristle Collins Judd, dean for academic affairs, is quoted in Bowdoin’s “Academic Spotlight,” explaining that “[f]rom a scholar’s point of view, symposia are a human version of supercomputing.”¹¹²⁹ Whether this translates into more vibrant intellectual life among Bowdoin students, however, is unclear.

Bowdoin’s other major institutional initiative aimed at stimulating campus intellectual community is the biweekly “Common Hour,” a ninety-minute period every other Friday during which classes are not held so that students, faculty, administrators, staff, and anyone else who is interested can attend.

Ten of the thirty-two Common Hours we have identified were devoted to student music and dance performances. Six were faculty lectures, eight were personal success stories, three were outside authors discussing their books, and three were alumni talking about their interests. Three others consisted of experts in far-flung fields speaking about their areas of expertise: evolutionary biologist James P. Collins considered the need for the discipline of biology to adapt to the challenges of the twenty-first century, dean of the Yale School of Art Robert Storr gave a lecture on “the effects of the ailing economy on artists and the art market,”¹¹³⁰ and African

¹¹²⁸“New Trends in Scholarship Take Shape at Bowdoin,” Bowdoin College, Academic Spotlight, December 21, 2009, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1academicnews/006944.shtml>.

¹¹²⁹Ibid.

¹¹³⁰“One Award to Honor Two Arts Leaders,” *New York Times*, October 2, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04/nyregion/04spotwe.html?_r=0.

elephant expert Katy Payne lectured on the songs of humpback whales and infrasonic elephant calls.

Again, the degree to which such symposia and lectures contribute to the formation of intellectual life at Bowdoin is imponderable. Certainly they don't hurt. The closing of fraternities and the establishment of Symposia and the Common Hour may have contributed something to the revitalization of campus intellectual life, but students still express anxiety over how much of an intellectual community Bowdoin really is. On October 17, 2008, the *Orient* recorded the thoughts of students on the matter. Josh King (Class of 2010) said, "If you want to be an intellectual and debate politics with your friends, you can find that, but if you just want to hang out and crush beers with your friends, there is no shortage of that either." Chris Sanville (Class of 2012) vacillated but ultimately concluded that Bowdoin is an intellectual campus because bathroom graffiti at Bowdoin is more likely to include quotations from Emerson than lewd drawings.¹¹³¹

Writing in the *Orient* in April 2009, Jonathan Coravos (Class of 2011) offered rodomontade:

our student body represents some of the most intelligent youth of the world. Bowdoin's worst student is by far and away much more astute than the vast majority of humans.¹¹³²

Nevertheless, he admitted, writing on a similar topic in October 2009, that there was an "intellectual apathy *between* students" (emphasis added).¹¹³³ Coravos asked,

How frequently do we even read each other's papers? Or present our work to one another, defending it against good-natured critique?

And concluded:

For Bowdoin to encourage a richer academic conversation, students need to take a stronger interest in the work our neighbors are producing.¹¹³⁴

In February 2009, Ross Jacobs (Class of 2010) forcefully warned first-year students against falling into this pattern:

As many of you settle into life in one of Bowdoin's clubs, teams, hallway units, groups, or academic departments, some of you may be frustrated with the lack of intellectual engagement here. Many of you will conform and nestle yourself into a social unit that is hostile to literary allusion, thought experiments, and public displays of erudition (PDE), but for a few of you, there will be a tacit and lingering, yet silent, rebellion against what

¹¹³¹Josh King, "Is Bowdoin an Intellectual Campus?" *Bowdoin Orient*, October 17, 2008, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3747>.

¹¹³²Jonathan Coravos, "Defining Modern Intellectualism," *Bowdoin Orient*, April 24, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4378>.

¹¹³³Jonathan Coravos, "Bowdoin Students Would Benefit from Sharing Their Brilliance," *Bowdoin Orient*, October 2, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4554>.

¹¹³⁴*Ibid.*

you see as a sterile intellectual culture incapable of giving birth to anything that could even come close to resembling our inherited standards of genius.¹¹³⁵

Jacobs reestablished the Peucinian Society with two classmates to provide a forum to stir intellectual engagement at Bowdoin.

Amanda Gartside (Class of 2012) echoed Coravos and Jacobs. She asked, “It is frustrating, heart-wrenching, confusing, and saddening all at the same time: Where is the intellectual discussion at Bowdoin?”¹¹³⁶ And continued:

So, why do intellectual discussions hopelessly wither outside of class? Why are students not engaged in passionate discourse about the subjects and values that they claim to hold dear?...And why are dinner conversations often superficial, dominated by hook-up gossip or the equivalent?¹¹³⁷

In her attempt to find intellectual discourse at Bowdoin, Gartside discovered that “Bowdoin has an intellectual scene, but it exists in pockets.” However, she was clearly dissatisfied with what she saw as a larger “cultural” problem.¹¹³⁸

Students at a great many American colleges and universities have a ready rationalization for the amount of time they spend partying: they say they “work hard and play hard,” i.e., the intensity of their academic effort requires an equally intense release. The first part of this equation is, however, open to some doubt. In *Academically Adrift*, Arum and Roksa cite studies from the 1920s to the present that have traced how much time college students spend studying. As recently as the 1960s, full-time college students “spent roughly forty hours per week on academic pursuits (i.e. combined studying and class time).” A “steady decline” commenced thereafter, and today

full-time college students on average report spending only twenty-seven hours per week on academic activities—that is, less time than a typical high school student spends at school. Average time studying fell from twenty-five hours per week in 1961 to twenty hours per week in 1981 and thirteen hours per week in 2003.¹¹³⁹

Arum and Roksa also report that the percentage of students who study well more than average—more than twenty hours per week—has plummeted. In 1961, that figure was 67 percent; in 1981, it had fallen to 44 percent; and in 2010, it had reached 20 percent.¹¹⁴⁰ At the other end of the

¹¹³⁵Ross Jacobs, “How to Rejuvenate Bowdoin’s Intellectual Culture,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 6, 2009, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/4098>.

¹¹³⁶Amanda Gartside, “Strengthening Our Intellectual Discourse,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 19, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5043>.

¹¹³⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹³⁸*Ibid.*

¹¹³⁹Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3. In this passage the authors cite the work of labor economists Philip Babcock and Mindy Marks.

¹¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 4.

scale, 37 percent of students nationwide report spending fewer than five hours per week preparing for their classes. Arum and Roksa comment:

The limited number of hours students spend studying is consistent with the emergence of a college student culture focused on social life and strategic management of work requirements.¹¹⁴¹

Bowdoin, of course, is not an “average” college and it is reasonable to wonder if the “work hard” of Bowdoin students is substantially greater than the “work hard” that labor economists have documented for American college students as a whole. One answer is suggested by Arum and Roksa, who report that students at “highly selective colleges” on average spend “five hours more per week studying than students who attend less selective colleges.”¹¹⁴²

Additional light is shed upon this topic by the studies of Bowdoin economics professor Jonathan Goldstein, who surveyed Bowdoin students in 2004–2005, 2005–2006, 2006–2007, and 2007–2008. Goldstein polled a total of 512 students, asking, “How many hours per week on average do you study/do school work outside of the time spent in classes?” He found that Bowdoin students study 17.4 hours per week on average.¹¹⁴³ This figure nearly matches the eighteen hours per week (thirteen plus five) that Arum and Roksa say is typical of students at selective liberal arts colleges. Hours spent studying, of course, are not a direct measure of the degree of the *shared* intellectual life of the college, but it is a pretty strong proxy. If the students have such limited engagement with their assigned academic work, what basis do they have to discuss their ideas with one another?

In any case, when Bowdoin students echo the national college student refrain, “work hard, play hard,” the work they are referring to amounts to substantially fewer hours per week than the average part-time job in the United States.¹¹⁴⁴ In the case of some Bowdoin students, the number of hours spent in academic pursuits is even less. Goldstein’s findings included the observation that varsity athletes at Bowdoin study on average 15.6 hours per week—10 percent less than the college’s average.¹¹⁴⁵

For some Bowdoin students, “work hard, play hard” rationalizes a pattern of behavior that is far more play than work. Other Bowdoin students, however, express concern about this pattern as something that “cheapens both work and play.”¹¹⁴⁶

¹¹⁴¹Ibid., 69.

¹¹⁴²Ibid., 70.

¹¹⁴³Jonathan Goldstein, “The Tradeoff between Extra-Curricular Activities and the Academic Mission of Small Liberal Arts Colleges: Why Some Schools Are Poor Educational Investments,” unpublished paper, August 19, 2008; rev. February 11, 2009, 2–3.

¹¹⁴⁴Maggie Bryan, “The Examined Life: A Night with the Peucinian Society,” *Bowdoin Orient*, October 12, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7503>.

¹¹⁴⁵Goldstein, “Tradeoff between Extra-Curricular Activities,” 3.

¹¹⁴⁶Bryan, “The Examined Life.”

Chapter 7

Faculty

To understand what a college teaches it is essential to understand who does the teaching. In our recounting of debates over the curriculum, key concepts, and student life, we have necessarily already painted a portrait of the faculty. In this chapter, we round out that portrait by looking at Bowdoin's focus on faculty research, course loads, educational credentials, publications, political involvement, grading, and advising. We begin with the most important long-term change: Bowdoin's shift from a "collegiate-teaching" model of undergraduate education to a "researcher-advising" model. We focus on the researcher part of this shift first and return to the advisor part thereafter.

I. Researcher-Teachers

Bowdoin once defined the liberal arts as the formation of the minds and character of its students through a curriculum taught by faculty members devoted to well-rounded instruction. Bowdoin still considers itself a liberal arts college, but it has replaced this older ideal. It now defines the liberal arts as a personal quest shaped to each student's particular interests. This is a change that over time has dramatically altered the college's faculty.

The Bowdoin of old required a faculty capable of teaching its well-rounded curriculum. It was a faculty who, in principle, shared and embodied the ideals of liberal learning. The faculty saw themselves primarily as *teachers*, and though they taught different subjects—history, physics, math—they were teaching those subjects as part of an integrated educational program. Bowdoin was a college that emphasized intellectual breadth over scholarly depth. This, of course, had drawbacks. Long-serving faculty members often drifted out of touch with new developments in their fields. Students who thirsted for the newest knowledge could find themselves frustrated by a curriculum that carried them only up to a certain point and no further.

The Bowdoin of today has reversed this situation. Because the college has no core curriculum and no emphasis on general education, it has no need for faculty members who embody the ideals of well-roundedness. Instead, Bowdoin has recast itself as a place that emphasizes intellectual discovery and innovation. It therefore seeks a faculty comprised mainly of research specialists. The curriculum, as we have discussed, reflects this. It is rife with specialized "topics" courses and has replaced most of the "survey" courses that once offered an integrated overview of a subject with more narrowly-tailored "introductory" courses intended to provide the student with the critical thinking skills needed to move quickly to more specialized topics.

It would be accurate to say that Bowdoin today is, like Bowdoin of yesterday, still interested in the formation of mind and character. Like the phrase “liberal arts,” many of the same words are still used and some of the same concepts. But they have all undergone internal transformation and mean something very different from what they once did.

Bowdoin’s own description of liberal education appears in the *Bowdoin College Catalogue* in what we have called a canonical document, “A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College.” We examined that document carefully in several earlier parts of this report, but it is useful to look at it one more time as an implicit mandate for faculty hiring.¹¹⁴⁷ The document emphasizes the student’s “intellectual challenge and personal growth,” rather than acquisition of any particular knowledge, it emphasizes “critical thinking” as the primary intellectual skill it attempts to cultivate, and it presents liberal education as shaped by the student’s obligation to pursue “the common good.” Lest any of these strictures appear to limit the student’s options, it adds that “a liberal education is not narrowly vocational.” While the Bowdoin student is “removed from many of the immediate responsibilities of daily adult life,” students learn to “engage” the world “through individual and group research, service-learning, volunteer activities, summer internships, off campus study and more.”¹¹⁴⁸

“A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College” effectively lays out a path for how faculty members should construe their role. They are to be generous-minded researchers who, while conducting their own research, seek opportunities to draw students into it. They should see their courses not as preparing students for a “vocation,” but as honing their capacity for “critical thinking.” And they should keep a close eye on “the common good,” which as we have examined at length now means explicit support for “diversity,” multiculturalism, feminism, gay rights, and sustainability.

During the first half of the twentieth century, many colleges of note, including Bowdoin, resisted the temptation to become a university. They recruited university scholars sparingly, and remained staunchly dedicated to teaching undergraduates. As Robert McCaughey, former dean of the faculty at Barnard College, described in 1994 in *Scholars and Teachers*—a detailed study of the faculties of twenty-four “Select Liberal Arts Colleges,” including Bowdoin—in the early twentieth century “colleges did as they had always had done: they turned to their own. College faculties made up of at least fifty percent of their own graduates remained common.”¹¹⁴⁹ Until the mid-twentieth century Bowdoin largely agreed with John Henry Newman’s belief that research and teaching rarely mixed. As Newman put it:

¹¹⁴⁷“A Liberal Education at Bowdoin College,” Bowdoin College, Academics, The Curriculum, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/curriculum/statement-liberal-education.shtml>.

¹¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁴⁹Robert McCaughey, *Scholars and Teachers: The Faculties of Select Liberal Arts Colleges and Their Place in American Higher Education* (New York: Conceptual Litho Reproductions, Inc., 1994), 24.

To discover and to teach are distinct functions; they are also distinct gifts, and are not commonly found united in the same person. He, too, who spends his day in dispensing existing knowledge to all comers is unlikely to have either leisure or energy to acquire new. The common sense of mankind has associated the search after truth with seclusion and quiet. The greatest thinkers have been too intent on their subject to admit of interruption; they have been men of absent minds and idiosyncratic habits, and have, more or less, shunned the lecture room and the public school.¹¹⁵⁰

Colleges like Bowdoin that stuck to this vision made their faculty members much more integral to the life of the college. Faculty members were expected to (and most did) show “a lively interest in intercollegiate athletics, availability to chaperone at social functions, and attendance at reunion gatherings.”¹¹⁵¹ A fully integrated faculty was one of the perks of being a “small” and “residential” institution.

And then things changed. At Bowdoin, this division between research and teaching slowly began to erode in the early twentieth century. The watershed moment was the appointment of President James Stacy Coles (1952–1967), who ushered in a new vision of Bowdoin’s faculty, who would seek to balance research and teaching and would work to initiate students into knowledge creation. In the 1961 *Report of the President*, Coles clarified the new place of research in the Bowdoin education:

Basically, research guarantees a liberating future, and its presence is exemplary to the undergraduates of the growth of knowledge. More pragmatically, for the college, research is the eternal price for lively teaching, and the opportunity for its pursuit is an indispensable compensation to be offered in recruiting new faculty of enduring quality.¹¹⁵²

Coles established, for example, the Faculty Development Fund to promote scholarly research. In 1956, faculty members began to receive research grants from business corporations and government agencies.¹¹⁵³ Coles likewise encouraged student research and sought to light a fuse of inspiration by establishing the Senior Center in 1964, where faculty and students would pursue experimental and original pedagogy together. These new faculty members styled themselves as a hybrid of the old collegiate scholar and the new professionalized university scholar by calling themselves “research-teachers.”

The move by Bowdoin and many other liberal arts colleges to appoint as faculty members individuals who are primarily research specialists in their disciplines has continued to prompt criticism both within some quarters of the academy and among the general public. The “flight

¹¹⁵⁰John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. Frank M. Turner, Rethinking the Western Tradition (London: Longman, Green, 1899; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 5–6.

¹¹⁵¹McCaughey, *Scholars and Teachers*, 27.

¹¹⁵²Quoted in Melvin T. Copeland, “A Decade of Progress: 1952–1962,” *Bowdoin College Bulletin*, no. 347 (December 1962), 19.

¹¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 19.

from teaching” has been widely noted, especially as it has resulted in drastically reduced teaching loads for scholars who need to reserve a significant portion of their time for research and writing. Another effect mentioned by critics is that research scholars are often more professionally dedicated to their disciplines than the colleges where they happen to teach.

While Bowdoin makes no serious attempt to ensure that its students graduate having learned certain facts or having read certain texts, it does still claim to foster intellectual “breadth.”¹¹⁵⁴ It envisions that the students will be able to obtain this breadth from “specialized” faculty. The *Mission of the College* explicitly describes the relationship:

The academic disciplines are specialized modes of inquiry through which human beings perceive and intellectually engage the world. Both their power and their limits have led the College to make a long-standing commitment to general education. Specialist faculty cause non-specialist students to become critically acquainted with the perspectives and methods of disciplines in three general divisions of learning: the natural sciences, the humanities and the arts, and the social sciences.¹¹⁵⁵

Students, in this view, are inspired by specialists to seek a kind of knowledge beyond what the specialists themselves epitomize. This can indeed happen: students can respond to pedantry with the desire to put pedantry behind them, and they can respond to narrowly specialized knowledge by discovering a thirst for intellectual breadth. Presumably some students glean general principles and modes of reasoning from specialized studies that they can then apply to other areas of knowledge. This is surely part of what Bowdoin means when it says it teaches “critical thinking.” This transference of skills, however, is left pretty much to chance.

With all due allowances, however, it seems odd to attempt to cultivate a taste for intellectual breadth by immersing students in the life of fine-grained intellectual specialization. Intellectual breadth is more than breadth of knowledge. The latter consists of knowing many particular things; the former requires a sense of proportion and an understanding of priority, which are not much in evidence in Bowdoin’s curriculum. Bowdoin’s justification of its preference for research specialists as faculty members thus turns on a paradox. It hopes and expects that students will *not* emulate the central and most prominent characteristic of the men and women it puts before them as their instructors and advisors.

This forceful disjunction between faculty member as collegiate teacher and faculty member as research expert does not always sit comfortably with the Bowdoin faculty. On October 1, 2001, in a wide-ranging discussion of curricular issues, former dean for academic affairs Craig McEwen voiced his concern over this asymmetry:

¹¹⁵⁴*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2011–2012*, 16.

¹¹⁵⁵“The Mission of the College,” *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2009–2010*, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/courses/catalog/pdf-09-10/03-mission.pdf>.

Do we have a tension or contradiction to work through if we view ourselves as role models for our students while we also emphasize the institutional value of being committed professionals in our disciplines? How do we get students to become broadly engaged as intellectuals without making them junior models of our professional selves?¹¹⁵⁶

Former professor of philosophy Denis Corish gave the most direct answer: “We do this by having much wider intellectual models ourselves.” Former assistant professor of economics Dorothea Herreiner recommended co-teaching courses as a way for faculty members to become exposed to “new aspects of our topics, and show students how we learn new things ourselves.” Herreiner suggested that Bowdoin faculty should include themselves “among the intellectual community.”¹¹⁵⁷

Research-Teachers: A Validation

Kristen Ghodsee, whom we have previously discussed, is an associate professor of gender and women’s studies whose “current research interests include the ethnographic study of post-communist nostalgia in Eastern Europe and the contributions of state socialist women’s organizations to the international women’s movement between 1968 and 1990.”¹¹⁵⁸

On April 25, 2008, Ghodsee published “A Research Career at a Liberal Arts College” in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Ghodsee sought to counter the idea that research specialists who ended up with appointments at liberal arts colleges such as Bowdoin were sacrificing research careers that could be better pursued at research universities.¹¹⁵⁹

In 2002, Ghodsee was finishing her Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley, in social and cultural studies when she began to apply for “every position for which [she] was even remotely qualified.” Ghodsee was taken aback by the tenacity of Bowdoin’s pursuit: “I was delighted when Bowdoin flew me out for an interview and offered me a tenure-track job in early December—well before most of the other departments had even made their short lists.” She had also been highly impressed by the package that Bowdoin offered:

The department offered me a competitive salary and a teaching load of two courses a semester, comparable to what I would expect at a major research university, as well as a generous pot of start-up money and the promise of a one-year sabbatical after my third year on the tenure track.

¹¹⁵⁶Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, October 1, 2001, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁸“Kristen Ghodsee” faculty page, Bowdoin College, Women’s and Gender Studies, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/faculty/k/ghodsee/>.

¹¹⁵⁹Kristen Ghodsee, “A Research Career at a Liberal Arts College,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 25, 2008, <http://chronicle.com/article/A-Research-Career-at-a/45760/>. All citations of this work are taken from this source.

Even so, she remained unsure whether to accept the position because it was a liberal arts college and many at Berkeley expressed derision for its lack of research opportunities:

[M]any of my professors and fellow students at Berkeley scoffed at the idea that I would accept a post at a liberal arts college. It was considered an acceptable choice only if none of the jobs at research universities came through.

Ultimately, she chose the sure thing and accepted the position.

Ghodsee had expected Bowdoin to be “merely” a “teaching institution” and expected that her research aspirations would be “prematurely smothered under an avalanche of needy undergraduates.” She braced for “academic death” but instead found the opposite. When given the opportunity to leave Bowdoin for a research institution Ghodsee declined because Bowdoin provided funds and time for her research beyond her wildest expectations.

Ghodsee had not been forced beneath “the crushing teaching burden that is a fact of academic life at many lesser-ranked colleges.” Instead, she said, “my experience, and that of many of my colleagues in the humanities and social sciences, is that the best liberal arts institutions are, in fact, more conducive to junior faculty research than some of their Research I counterparts.” More precisely:

In the first place, many small private colleges have generous faculty-research funds; the abundance of internal money available means that junior scholars can pursue ambitious scholarly agendas without constantly seeking (and waiting for) external grants. That’s especially helpful if your research, like mine, requires international travel.

Leave policy is also flexible at many small colleges. Several of my colleagues and I have enjoyed two years of sabbatical leave before going up for tenure—something I have been told would never be allowed at many larger universities.

In the long term, the lack of graduate students may be undesirable for those who hope to academically reproduce themselves. But in the short term, not having graduate students frees up a lot of time for junior professors to work on their own research instead of, say, reading drafts of other people’s dissertations.

Ghodsee also enjoyed Bowdoin’s “collegial” atmosphere, which she attributed to the lack of competition for tenured spots.

Ghodsee’s life as a junior faculty member was something of an embarrassment of riches:

In my own case, as a result of a low teaching load, generous internal grants, and two years of junior leave to take advantage of external fellowships, I was able to do the research and writing for a second book and several peer-reviewed journal articles. I successfully came up for tenure in my sixth year.

In the end, Ghodsee found the research university wanting:

[T]he truth is, some of those universities offer comparatively lower salaries, less generous leave policies, fewer internal resources, more service commitments, larger bureaucracies, and, when graduate advising is considered, higher teaching and mentoring commitments.

And where the research university lacked, Bowdoin excelled:

[F]or serious scholars committed to living in the world of ideas, the ability to carve out of one's professional obligations enough time for reading, thinking, and writing should be the true measure of whether an institution is conducive to research—and not simply whether it is called a “research” institution.¹¹⁶⁰

Ghodsee's portrait of the life of the faculty member at Bowdoin today is extraordinary not least in how strongly it testifies to how little students matter to one ambitious research scholar. Plainly it would not be wise to generalize from Ghodsee's testimony. Some Bowdoin faculty members are serious scholars who (in defiance of Newman's edict) are also talented and dedicated teachers. But it says something about Bowdoin's academic climate that a faculty member would feel no compunction about publishing an article in the trade newspaper of higher education in which she welcomes the minimization of students in her professional life: not to be “smothered” by “needy undergraduates,” to have a “low teaching load,” and to have time off from that, too, with an early sabbatical leave—these are the keys to Ghodsee's version of career fulfillment.

II. Course Load

One of the reasons that Prof. Ghodsee is able to carve out “time for reading, thinking, and writing” is that Bowdoin has a generous sabbatical policy. Another reason is that Bowdoin faculty members have an extremely light teaching load.

According to the *U.S. News & World Report*, in 2007 Bowdoin's faculty shared the distinction of having a four-course teaching load, the lightest load “among the top private 100 private liberal arts colleges with [a] semester system.”¹¹⁶¹ *U.S. News & World Report* listed the teaching load of ninety-eight of those institutions:

Figure 54: *U.S. News & World Report's Teaching Load Comparison of Colleges, 2007*

- Number of colleges with four-course schedule: 11
- Number of colleges with five-course schedule: 39
- Number of colleges with 5.5-course schedule (11 courses every 2 years): 1
- Number of colleges with six-course schedule: 45

¹¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹¹⁶¹“Faculty Teaching Load at the Top Private 100 Liberal Arts Colleges with Semester System—2007,” *U.S. News & World Report*, n.d.

- Number of colleges with greater than six-course schedule: 2

Colleges listed as having four-course schedules are: Williams, Amherst, Wellesley, Bowdoin, Pomona, Wesleyan, Claremont McKenna, Smith, Macalester, Mount Holyoke, and Sarah Lawrence.¹¹⁶²

The standard annual teaching load for Bowdoin professors is what Bowdoin calls the “2-2 teaching load.” Two courses taught in the fall semester, two in the spring. According to Bowdoin’s 2006 *Self-Study*, the 2-2 load helps “Bowdoin attract its first-choice faculty candidates to the campus” and frees time for “faculty scholarship, research, and artistic work.”¹¹⁶³ Some language courses, it adds, require a five-course load and some sciences a three-course load with laboratory instruction. But four is the standard.¹¹⁶⁴

III. Faculty Members’ Educational Backgrounds

Bowdoin faculty members are, of course, highly educated. In this section we focus on their “terminal degrees,” i.e., the highest academic degree earned, generally a doctorate and generally a Ph.D. Doctoral degrees are one-of-a-kind, since to earn them a candidate is expected to undertake original research and to write a dissertation based on that research. But the graduate program in which an individual receives a Ph.D. or other doctoral degree is also a major factor in an individual’s subsequent career. The prestige of the university itself is one factor, but an even greater factor is the reputation of the graduate program within the individual’s discipline as well as the reputation of the individual’s principal research advisor.

When individuals seek faculty positions they are evaluated in many areas. Colleges such as Bowdoin hire new faculty with an eye toward research specializations, accomplishments within those specializations, likelihood of further contributions, fit within the college’s existing mix of topical strengths and weaknesses, and much more. We know from material examined earlier in this report that Bowdoin explicitly and strongly emphasizes the race, ethnicity, and sex of applicants in the college’s quest for greater “diversity.” Somewhere in this list of considerations is the prestige and reputation of the academic program from which the candidate received (or is about to receive) a Ph.D.

Some data:

- According to its 2011 *NEASC Fifth Year Report*, 99 percent of Bowdoin’s faculty members have received a terminal degree.¹¹⁶⁵

¹¹⁶²Ibid.

¹¹⁶³*The Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2006), 56.

¹¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁵Bowdoin College, *New England Association of Schools and Colleges Fifth Year Report* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2011), 2.

- According to the *NEASC Fifth Year Report*, in 2011, 94 percent of Bowdoin’s faculty was full-time.¹¹⁶⁶
- According to the *NEASC Fifth Year Report*, as of fall 2011, 64 percent of Bowdoin’s faculty was tenured.¹¹⁶⁷ In its *2006 Self-Study*, Bowdoin reported that 90 percent of its “full-time equivalent faculty” was tenure-line.¹¹⁶⁸
- From 1996 to 2006, Bowdoin increased its full-time equivalent non-tenure-track faculty from 8.75 to 14.5—an increase of 60 percent.¹¹⁶⁹

The total number of instructional appointments listed in the 2012–2013 *Bowdoin College Catalogue* is 257.¹¹⁷⁰

Figure 55: Total Academic Appointments by Title, *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*

• Assistant professor:	47
• Associate professor:	65 (5 term chairs)
• Professor:	60 (25 full chairs)
• Visiting assistant professor:	20
• Distinguished lecturer:	1
• Senior lecturer:	8
• Lecturer:	9
• Adjunct lecturer:	16
• Adjunct professor:	1
• Adjunct assistant professor:	1
• Visiting professor:	1
• Visiting lecturer:	2
• Visiting instructor:	5
• Postdoctoral fellow:	15
• Postdoctoral scholar:	1
• Sculptor in residence:	1
• Artist in residence:	2
• Writer in residence:	1
• Director of Bowdoin Chorus:	1

¹¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁸*Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006*, 45.

¹¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁷⁰*Bowdoin Catalogue 2012–2013*, 316–29. Appointments to the athletic department were not included in the full tabulation.

Credentials

The college endorsed Robert McCaughey’s *Scholars and Teachers*, the aforementioned faculty study of twenty-four “Select Liberal Arts Colleges” (SLAC), including Bowdoin, in its 1996 *Self-Study*.¹¹⁷¹ According to McCaughey, one of the trends associated with a turn toward research at a SLAC is a decrease in appointed faculty members who are alumni of the appointing institution, even as the institution’s faculty expands. This is reflected in the history of instructional appointments at Bowdoin.

Figure 56: Total Instructors Versus Alumni Instructors at Bowdoin College

Year	Total Number of Instructors	Number of Alumni Instructors	Percentage of Alumni Instructors	Number of Tenured Alumni Instructors
2012–2013	257	10	4	4
1951–1952	73	19	26	12
1900–1901	35	22	63	Unknown

Source: Data on 2012–2013 was listed in *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*. Data on 1951–1952 was listed in *Bowdoin College Bulletin 1951–1952*. For 1900–1901, the data on the appointments to the Officers of Instruction was gathered using the *Catalogue of Bowdoin College and the Medical School of Maine 1900–1901*, and their place of undergraduate study was retrieved from the *General Catalogue of Bowdoin College and the Medical School of Maine 1794–1812*.

McCaughey also developed a standard of measuring whether an individual appointed to a faculty position in the social sciences and humanities is a high-quality candidate:

More than a third of all SLAC faculty earned their PhDs at just three universities—Harvard, Yale and Columbia. When the three next largest sources—Princeton, Chicago and Cornell—are added to the top three, more than half of all PhDs among SLAC faculty are accounted for. Add the next four—Berkeley, Michigan, Stanford and Wisconsin—and the proportion approaches two-thirds. Ten universities, which in 1980 produced only 20% of all PhDs in the humanities and social sciences, account for almost two-thirds of all PhDs held by SLAC faculty in these fields. The result is that SLAC faculty are...likely to be the products of the “top” graduate universities.¹¹⁷²

By applying McCaughey’s standard to Bowdoin at the time of his study and again today, we can see some patterns that would not be visible at a casual glance at faculty credentials:

¹¹⁷¹*The Bowdoin College Self-Study 1996*, 21, catalog no. 1.29, folders 10–30, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹¹⁷²McCaughey, *Scholars and Teachers*, 32.

Figure 57: SLAC Versus Bowdoin, Ph.D. and Other Doctoral-Level Terminal Degrees, by Source, for Humanities and Social Sciences

Institution	SLAC Faculty 1991–1992 (%)	Bowdoin Faculty 1991–1992 (%)	Bowdoin Faculty 2012–2013 (%)
Harvard	12	10	4
Yale	10	7	3
Columbia	7	8	3
Princeton	5	2	4
Chicago	5	6	5
UC Berkeley	4	5	7
Stanford	3	3	3
Michigan	3	6	8
Wisconsin	3	4	4
Other Institutions	44	49	59

Source: Data for SLAC Faculty, 1991–1992, is from McCaughey, *Scholars and Teachers*, figure 2.7, p. 53. Data for Bowdoin Faculty, 1991–1992, is from *Bowdoin College Catalogue 1991–1992*, and for Bowdoin Faculty 2012–2013 is from *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*. Data provided for all three categories does not include faculty who did not have Ph.D. or a doctoral equivalent.

In 1991–1992, 51 percent of Bowdoin faculty members had received Ph.D.s from nine of the ten universities that McCaughey rated as “top” (inexplicably, he omitted Cornell from his calculations). By 2012–2013, that percentage had slipped to 41 percent. Does this indicate a decline in the quality of Bowdoin faculty or merely a shift to a more diverse set of graduate programs from which Bowdoin made new appointments?

McCaughey’s standard was not based on what he considered an exhaustive list of *the* premiere programs; rather, he took the fact that a large number of faculty members were drawn from these schools as indicative of the larger principle that a majority of SLAC faculty were drawn from a select group of high-quality programs.

McCaughey understood this reliance by liberal arts colleges on these reputable graduate institutions as a form of quality control: “departments limiting their faculty recruitment pools to candidates with ‘brand name’ degrees [provides] a basis for attesting to the quality of those hired.” Such “brand name” degrees “speaks well of [a candidate’s] academic purposefulness and professional promise.” But he also thought that reliance on these programs represented “a survival of earlier understandings between SLACs and traditional sources.”¹¹⁷³

Bowdoin, as we have seen, is determined not to be overly reliant on “traditional sources.”

¹¹⁷³Ibid., 32–33.

Its “Faculty Recruitment Procedures,” for instance, strongly suggest that reliance upon these traditional programs by faculty search committees may be a product of “unexamined bias”:

Committees are reminded that many criteria by which educational qualifications are judged may seem neutral but often they are not. For instance, preconceptions about the prestige of applicants’ degree-granting institutions often limit recruitment efforts to favorite institutions or areas of the country. In order to diversity [*sic*] the applicant pool, search committees should consider the most able candidates from a broad range of graduate institutions.¹¹⁷⁴

McCaughey’s standard is not meant as a prescription but instead as a diagnostic indicator.¹¹⁷⁵

IV. Faculty Research and Publications

Bowdoin transformed between the early 1960s and the early 1970s. As discussed, prior to that transformation Bowdoin maintained its older “collegiate” model of undergraduate education taught by faculty members who emphasized teaching over research and who regarded themselves as broadly educated individuals overall and generalists within their fields. Bowdoin eventually abandoned the collegiate model, which lost favor under President Coles, and replaced it with an approach that prized the student’s self-direction and self-discovery while emphasizing the faculty member primarily as an accomplished expert and researcher in a specialized academic field. From then forward, Bowdoin focused increasingly on recruiting new faculty members who fit this image.

The transition did not satisfy all Bowdoin faculty. A memory persisted of the old collegiate model and as late as the 1986 *Self-Study*, some faculty members were pushing back against what they saw as the “over-valuing [of scholarly] activity,” which they thought “may impair the quality of education in the classroom and attention to students.”¹¹⁷⁶ Resistance appears to have dwindled in the ensuing years and today there is no serious disagreement at Bowdoin that the faculty as a whole should be recruited from among active research scholars.

Bowdoin’s faculty, however, remains sensitive to questions about whether they are pulling their weight. In October 2012, seven faculty members wrote a joint letter to the *Orient*, “Professors Do Much More than Teach and Advise, When You Look behind the Scenes,” in which they argued that “beyond teaching, scholarship is the more important component of our

¹¹⁷⁴“Faculty Recruitment Procedures 2012–2013,” Bowdoin College, Dean for Academic Affairs, 5, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/department-chairs/pdf/faculty-recruiting-memo.pdf>.

¹¹⁷⁵We also prepared for this report but have not published here an analysis of Bowdoin faculty members’ credentials using the National Research Council Rankings. The results were interesting but the NRC ranking system is notoriously confusing and the results required too lengthy an exposition to include.

¹¹⁷⁶“The 1986 Aug, Institutional Self-Study Outline,” Bowdoin College, 30, catalog no. 1.29, vol. 4, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Brunswick, ME.

job.”¹¹⁷⁷ They gave three reasons for this importance: that the mission of the college is to advance knowledge, that “scholarship infuses teaching,” and that scholarship “enhances the reputation of the College and thereby increases the value of the degree you hope to receive.” The letter writers concluded:

[E]very time a Bowdoin faculty member publishes an article or a book, produces a play, composes a symphony, wins a prestigious grant or fellowship, is elected as an officer in a professional association, or is awarded any kind of honor, we not only advance the common good, but we bring distinction to Bowdoin, enhance the College’s reputation, and thereby increase the value of a Bowdoin diploma.¹¹⁷⁸

Bowdoin’s faculty taken as a whole are active and productive scholars. Using the websites of the academic departments supplemented with webpages from individual faculty members and sometimes general searches on the Internet, we have compiled as comprehensive a list as possible of faculty publications, including books, journal articles, book chapters, book reviews, op-ed essays, conference papers, exhibitions, recitals, and whatever else faculty members themselves deemed worth reporting, as of January 2013. By this count, current faculty members have reported 141 published books, 1816 refereed journal articles, and 242 book chapters.¹¹⁷⁹ Our list of faculty members for this purpose includes all who were teaching courses as of fall 2012 (including postdoctoral fellows), according to Bowdoin’s website, which lists a total of 258 academic appointments.¹¹⁸⁰ Of these, we were able to find publication lists for 184 and were unable to find publications for seventy-four. Our list of publications, of course, is only as up-to-date as the self-reported lists we were able to locate.¹¹⁸¹

Because Bowdoin strongly encourages faculty members to teach in the areas of their research, the dissertations and the scholarly publications have a direct bearing on the curriculum and on what actually happens in the classroom.¹¹⁸² It seems unlikely that anyone at Bowdoin would dispute this, but to illustrate the point we present profiles of the four faculty members to whom Bowdoin granted tenure in 2013.

1- Jill Suzanne Smith

¹¹⁷⁷Barbara Weiden Boyd et al., “Professors Do Much More than Teach and Advise, When You Look behind the Scenes,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, October 11, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7495>. The seven faculty members who signed the letter: Barbara Weiden Boyd, Kristen Ghodsee, Page Herrlinger, John Holt, Steve Naculich, Steve Perkinson, and Scott Sehon.

¹¹⁷⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁷⁹Of the 141 books published, thirty-six were edited volumes, five were novels, and two were collections of short stories. Of the 1816 refereed journal articles published (excluding popular articles, conference presentations or invited lectures), forty-one were short stories by Brock Clarke, associate professor of English.

¹¹⁸⁰The discrepancy between the total number of academic appointments listed on Bowdoin’s website—258—and the total number of academic appointments listed in 2012–2013 *College Catalogue*—257—is likely a product of the timeliness of the website, which is updated more frequently than the *Catalogue*, which is updated once a year.

¹¹⁸¹It does not seem to be a requirement that faculty members post their publications on their departmental webpage. Some faculty members provide a complete C.V., others do not.

¹¹⁸²*Faculty Handbook 2012–2013*, 1: “The College encourages and expects faculty to engage in scholarly or artistic activities, especially those which complement their work for students and the College and also contribute to the larger professional community.”

Title: Associate Professor of German, tenured 2013; serving as department chair, Spring 2013¹¹⁸³

Teaches:

- GER027 “From Flowers of Evil to Pretty Woman: Prostitutes in Modern Western Culture” (Fall 2012)
- GER101 “Elementary German I” (Fall 2010)
- GER152 “Berlin: Sin City, Divided City, City of the Future” (Spring 2012)
- GER203 “Intermediate German I: Germany within Europe” (Fall 2012)
- GER204 “Intermediate German II: German History through Visual Culture” (Spring 2012, Spring 2013)
- GER308 “Introduction to German Literature and Culture” (Spring 2011)
- GER315 “Realism and Revolution in Nineteenth-Century German Literature and Culture” (Fall 2010)
- GER316 “German Modernism—Urbanity, Interiority, Sexuality” (Spring 2013)
- GER390 “Robots, Vamps, and Whores: Women in German Culture and Society, 1880-1989” (Spring 2008)
- GER397 “Global Germany?” (Spring 2011, Fall 2013)

Listed “Research & Teaching Interests”:

- German literature, intellectual history, and culture, 19th & 20th century
- Gender & sexuality studies
- German-Jewish Studies: German Jews in the 19th and 20th centuries, literary and artistic representations of the Holocaust
- Fin-de-Siècle Berlin & Vienna
- The Weimar Republic: popular fiction, art, and film
- Language pedagogy, curriculum development, teaching with technology

Publications:

- “Just How Naughty *Was* Berlin? The Geography of Prostitution and Female Sexuality in Curt Moreck’s Erotic Travel Guide” in: *Spatial Turns: Space, Place, and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture*, Eds. Barbara Mennel & Jaimey Fischer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010) 53–77

¹¹⁸³ All material cited in this section can be accessed on “Jill Suzanne Smith” faculty page, Bowdoin College, Department of German, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/faculty/jjsmith5/>; except for any course descriptions or courses listed under “Teaches” which were cited from Bowdoin’s recent catalogs; references to Smith’s dissertation, “Reading the Red Light: Literary, Cultural, and Social Discourse on Prostitution in Berlin, 1880–1933,” University of Indiana, Bloomington, 2004, which are taken from Proquest Dissertations and Theses, an online database, <http://www.umi.com/en-US/catalogs/databases/detail/pqdt.shtml>; and where otherwise noted.

- “Richard Oswald & the Social Hygiene Film: Promoting Public Health or Promiscuity?” in *The Many Faces of Weimar German Cinema*, Ed. Christian Rogowski (Rochester: Camden House, 2010) 13–30
- “Working Girls: White-Collar Workers and Prostitutes in Late Weimar Fiction” in: *The German Quarterly* 81.4 (Fall 2008) 449–470
- “A Female Old Shatterhand? Colonial Heroes and Heroines in Lydia Höpker’s Tales of Southwest Africa” in: *Women in German Yearbook* 19 (December 2003) 141–158

Translation:

- Fritz Breithaupt, “Culture of Images: Limitation in Goethe’s *Wahlverwandtschaften*” in: *Monatshefte* 92.3 (Fall 2000) 302–320

Book Reviews:

- Stephanie Günther. *Weiblichkeitsentwürfe des Fin de Siècle Berliner Autorinnen. Alice Berend, Margarete Böhme, Clara Viebig*. Bonn: Bouvier, 2007, in: *German Studies Review* 33.1 (February 2010) 212
- David A. Brenner. *German-Jewish Popular Culture before the Holocaust. Kafka’s Kitsch*. London: Routledge, 2008, in: *German Studies Review* (October 2009) 661
- Walter Frisch. *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*, Berkeley: U of CA Press, 2005, in: *Studies in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Literature* 33.1 (Winter 2009) 187–189
- Christiane Schönfeld, Ed. *Commodities of Desire: The Prostitute in Modern German Literature*, Rochester: Camden House, 2000, in: *Women in German Newsletter* (Summer 2002) 12–14

Publications in Progress:

Book: *Berlin Coquette: Prostitution, New Womanhood, and Desire in the German Capital, 1890–1933* (under review)

Article: “Reviving Tradition? German-Jewish Humor in Dani Levy’s *Alles auf Zucker!*”

According to the abstract, Prof. Smith’s dissertation, “Reading the Red Light: Literary, Cultural, and Social Discourse on Prostitution in Berlin, 1880–1933,” at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, dealt with, “the concept of the prostitute as self-conscious commodity” who “recognizes her commodity status and uses it to her own advantage—perhaps to gain financial autonomy, social mobility, or simply to attract attention.” Smith’s subsequent publications have continued this line of research and she had threaded it into some of her courses.

“From Flowers of Evil to Pretty Woman: Prostitutes in Modern Western Culture” is focused entirely on prostitution. It “explores the myriad ways that prostitutes have been represented in modern Western culture from the end of the nineteenth century to the present.” “Robots, Vamps, and Whores: Women in German Culture and Society, 1880–1989” likewise gives prominent attention to prostitution. But some of Smith’s other courses that are framed

around other issues include secondary foci on prostitution or sexuality. For example, “Global Germany?” explores German culture from 1990 to the present, and “Critically considers issues such as migration, terrorism and genocide, sex tourism, the formation of the European Union and the supposed decline of the nation-state.” Smith’s course, “Realism and Revolution in Nineteenth-Century German Literature and Culture” examines several “revolutions” including “sexual revolution.”

In 2010, Bowdoin awarded Prof. Smith its highest award for teaching by untenured members of the faculty, the Karofsky Prize. The college’s “Academic Spotlight,” which announced the awarding of the prize, noted:

Smith has developed highly original curriculum that reflects aspects of her scholarship, with courses such as: Berlin: Sin City, Divided City, City of the Future; and Robots, Vamps and Whores: Women in German Culture and Society: 1880–1989.¹¹⁸⁴

2- Sara O’Brien Conly

Title: Associate Professor of Philosophy, tenured 2013¹¹⁸⁵

Teaches:

- PHIL 18 “Love” (Fall 2009, Spring 2013)
- PHIL 111 “Ancient Philosophy” (Fall 2008, Fall 2009, Fall 2011, Fall 2012)
- PHIL 120 “Moral Problems” (Spring 2008, Spring 2010, Spring 2013)
- PHIL 220 “Bioethics” (Fall 2008, Fall 2011, Fall 2013)
- PHIL 241 “Philosophy of Law” (Spring 2009, Spring 2012, Spring 2014)
- PHIL 249 “African Philosophy” (Spring 2009)
- PHIL 315 “The Good Life” (Spring 2010)
- PHIL 325 “Utilitarianism and Its Critics” (Spring 2012)
- PHIL 346 “Philosophy of Gender: Sex and Love” (Fall 2012)

Book: *Against Autonomy: Justifying Coercive Paternalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Author’s Description: “*Against Autonomy* is a defense of paternalistic laws; that is, laws that make you do things, or prevent you from doing things, for your own good. I argue that autonomy, or the freedom to act in accordance with your own decisions, is overrated—that the common high evaluation of the importance of autonomy is based on a

¹¹⁸⁴“Jill Smith Awarded 2010 Karofsky Prize,” Bowdoin College, Academic Spotlight, May 12, 2010, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1academicnews/007395.shtml>.

¹¹⁸⁵All material cited in this section can be accessed on “Sara O’Brien Conly” faculty page, Bowdoin College, Department of Philosophy, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/faculty/s/conly/>; except for any course descriptions or courses listed under “Teaches” which were cited from Bowdoin’s recent catalogs; references to Conly’s dissertation, “Utilitarianism and Individuality,” Cornell University, 1982, which are taken from Proquest Dissertations and Theses, an online database, <http://www.umi.com/en-US/catalogs/databases/detail/pqdt.shtml>; and where otherwise noted.

belief that we are much more rational than we actually are. We now have lots of evidence from psychology and behavioral economics that we are often very bad at choosing effective means to our ends. In such cases, we need the help of others—and in particular, of government regulation—to keep us from going wrong.”

Journal Articles:

- “Utilitarianism and Integrity.” *The Monist*. 66 (2): 298–311. 1983.
- “Can a Life of Child-rearing Be Meaningful?” *Philosophy Now*. 24. Summer 1999.¹¹⁸⁶
- “Why Feminists Should Oppose Feminist Virtue Ethics.” *Philosophy Now*. 33. Sept/Oct 2001.¹¹⁸⁷
- “Seduction, Rape, and Coercion.” *Ethics*. 115. October 2004. Pp. 96–121.
 Conly wrote: “To call all sexual wrongdoing rape also does a disservice to those who have suffered the absolute terror of violent assault and whose suffering can’t, I think, be compared to that of the person who has reluctantly agreed to have sex to avoid emotional distress. This may be a case where analytical philosophy, with its conceptual distinctions and semantic precision, can indeed explain something to our sense of order and can actually be useful.”¹¹⁸⁸
- “The Rights to Procreation: Merits and Limits.” *American Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 42. No. 2. April 2005.
 The article begins: “I want to show that government limits on reproduction are morally acceptable.”¹¹⁸⁹

Book Chapters: “Is Starbuck a Woman?” in Jason T. Eberl. Ed. *Battlestar Galactica and Philosophy: Knowledge Here Begins Out There*. Blackwell Philosophy and Popular Culture #7. New York: Wiley-Blackwell. 2008.

Book in Progress: *One: Do We Have a Right to More Children?*

Author’s Description: “We tend to think of regulating the number of children people may have as morally reprehensible. For one thing, the right to have a family is one we often think of as sacrosanct, articulated, among other places, in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. And, we think that women have the right to control their bodies, and while this right is mentioned often in the context of the right to abortion, it may also be held to include the right to have as many children as one wants. Lastly, we

¹¹⁸⁶Sara Conly, “Can a Life of Child-rearing be Meaningful,” *Philosophy Now*, Issue 24 (Summer 1999), http://philosophynow.org/issues/24/Can_a_Life_of_Child-rearing_Be_Meaningful.

¹¹⁸⁷Sara Conly, “Why Feminists Should Oppose Feminist Virtue Ethics,” *Philosophy Now*, Issue 33 (Sept/Oct 2001), http://philosophynow.org/issues/33/Why_Feminists_Should_Oppose_Feminist_Virtue_Ethics.

¹¹⁸⁸Sara Conly, “Seduction, Rape, and Coercion,” *Ethics* 115, no. 1 (October 2004): 96–121.

¹¹⁸⁹Sara Conly, “The Rights to Procreation: Merits and Limits,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 2 (April 2005), 105-115.

think of such policies as having sanctions that are unacceptable, including forced abortions of those who become pregnant with a second child. In *One*, I argue that opposition to population regulation is based on a number of mistakes: that the right to have a family doesn't entail the right to have as many children as you may want; that the right to control one's body is conditional on how much harm you are doing to others; and that nothing in population regulation entails that those who break the law can be forced to have abortions, or subject to any sort of punishment that is horrific. If population growth is sufficiently dangerous, it is fair for us to impose restrictions on how many children we can give birth to."

Conference Paper: "Against Autonomy," given at the "ISUS [International Society for Utilitarian Studies] 2012 Conference: Exploring the Past; Looking to the Future" on August 9, 2012.

Paper's Argument: "I will argue that, in many more cases than we now allow, [society] should [make people do what is good for them]; that preserving our liberty of action is not worth the costs of exercising choice. I argue, then, against autonomy, against what Joel Feinberg has called "[t]he kernel of the idea of autonomy...the right to make choices and decisions—what to put in my body, what contacts with my body to permit, where and how to move my body through public space, how to use my chattels and personal property, what personal information to disclose to others, what information to conceal, and more."¹¹⁹⁰

In her 1982 dissertation at Cornell, "Utilitarianism and Individuality," Conly argued that critics who say that utilitarians "cannot maintain their integrity" and that they "cannot, in the end, be individuals of the sort human beings want to be" are wrong. Rather, she argued, "utilitarianism need not endanger integrity, that it need not undercut autonomy, and that it need not deny individuality of any sort."

It is unclear from course descriptions to what degree Conly's research shapes the courses she teaches. The course descriptions are terse and we have only one of her syllabi, for "Ancient Philosophy," which shows no connection to her research. Her course on "Bioethics" deals with social and moral issues that are favored by utilitarians: "cloning, genetic engineering, biological patenting, corporate funding for medical research, use of experimental procedures, and others." Her work on coercion and autonomy could find a place in "Philosophy of Law," which deals with these "particular legal issues": "the nature and status of privacy rights (e.g., contraception, abortion, and the right to die); the legitimacy of restrictions on speech and expression (e.g., pornography, hate speech); the nature of equality rights (e.g., race and gender); and the right to liberty (e.g., homosexuality)." Likewise, her course on "Moral Problems" lists the following

¹¹⁹⁰Sara Conly, "Against Autonomy: Justifying Coercive Paternalism," paper presented at "Exploring the Past, Looking to the Future," the International Society for Utilitarian Studies 2012 Conference, NYU Leonard N. Stern School of Business, New York, NY, August 9, 2012, http://www.stern.nyu.edu/cons/groups/content/documents/webasset/con_037090.pdf.

topics: “abortion, physician-assisted suicide, capital punishment, sexuality, the justifiability of terrorism, and the justice of war.” But we cannot make conclusions without further evidence.

Conly recently wrote on the blog *Public Reason* that “the state is justified in persuading [people] to change their views because their views are harmful to democracy.” In the same place she wrote, “I would be happy enough to change people’s minds through the use of non-rational means, through propaganda or whatever it may be called.”¹¹⁹¹

3- Guy Mark Foster

Title: Associate Professor of English, tenured 2013¹¹⁹²

Teaches:

- ENG10 “The Real Life of Literature” (Fall 2010)
- ENG12 “African American Writers and the Short Story” (Fall 2011)
- ENG27 “Love and Trouble: Black Women Writers” (Fall 2008, Fall 2012)
- ENG108 “Introduction to Black Women’s Literature” (Spring 2009)
- ENG111 “Introduction to LGBTQ Fiction” (Spring 2012)
- ENG209 “Interracial Narratives” (Fall 2012)
- ENG260 “African American Fiction: (Re) Writing Black Masculinities” (Fall 2010, Spring 2013)
- ENG276 “Queer Race” (Spring 2011)
- ENG281 “African American Writers and the Autobiography” (Spring 2011)
- ENG319 “James Baldwin” (Spring 2012)
- ENG327 “White Negroes” (Spring 2009, Spring 2013)

Listed “Areas of Interest”:

- 20th Century American literature
- African American Literature
- Lesbian and Gay Literature
- Interracial Narratives

¹¹⁹¹Sarah Conly, “Brettschneider Reading Group: Chapter Two: Publicly Justifiable Privacy and Reflective Revision by Citizens,” *Public Reason: A Blog for Political Philosophers*, November 15, 2012, <http://publicreason.net/2012/11/15/brettschneider-chapter-two-reading-group-publicly-justifiable-privacy-and-reflective-revision-by-citizens/>.

¹¹⁹²All material cited in this section can be accessed on “Guy Mark Foster” faculty page, Bowdoin College, Department of English, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/faculty/g/gmfoster/>; except for any course descriptions or courses listed under “Teaches” which were cited from Bowdoin’s recent catalogs; and references to Foster’s dissertation, “Love’s Future Structures? The Dilemma of Interracial Coupling in Postwar African American Literature,” Brown University, 2003, which are taken from Proquest Dissertations and Theses, an online database, <http://www.umi.com/en-US/catalogs/databases/detail/pqdt.shtml>.

- Literary Memoirs
- Queer Theory
- Psychoanalytic Theory

Publications:

- “African American Literature and Queer Studies: The Conundrum of James Baldwin.” *A Companion to African American Literature*. Ed. Gene Andrew Jarett, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- “Looking Good: Neutralizing the Desiring (Black Male) Gaze in Alice Walker’s *Meridian*.” *Symbiosis* 13.2 Special Issue October 2009.
- “Translating (Black) Queerness: Unpacking the Conceptual Linkages Between Racialized Masculinities, Consensual Sex, and the Practice of Torture.” *Souls* 11.2 April 2009.
- “‘Do I look like someone you can come home to from where you may be going?’ Re-mapping Interracial Desire in Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*.” *African American Review* 41.1 Spring 2007.
- “How Dare a Black Woman Make Love to a White Man! Black Women Romance Novelists and the Taboo of Interracial Desire.” *Empowerment versus Oppression: 21st Century Views of Popular Romance Novels*. Ed. Sally Goade, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007.
- “Desire and the ‘Big Black Sex Cop’: Race and the Politics of Intimacy on HBO’s *Six Feet Under*” (*The New Queer Aesthetic on Television: Essays on Recent Programming*, Eds. James Keller & Leslie Stratyner, McFarland Publishers, 2006)
- Encyclopedia Entries: ZZ Packer and Robert Stepto. *An Encyclopedia of African American Literature*. Eds. Hans Ostrom and David Macey. Greenwood Press (forthcoming).
- “Welcome to the Funhouse: Critical Theory and the ‘Problem’ of Interracial Sexuality.” Review Essay of *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French* (Duke UP, 1999), T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting. *Radical Philosophy Review* 2.2 (Winter, 1999): 10 pages.
- “This Man and Me.” *Ancestral House: The Black Short Story in The Americas and Europe*. Ed. Charles H. Rowell (CO: Westview Press, 1995), Fiction.
- Review of *Lives of Notable Gay Men and Lesbians: James Baldwin*, Randall Kenan (Chelsea House Publishers, 1994). *Lambda Book Report*. March/April 1994.
- Review of *The Tranquil Lake of Love: Poems*, Carl Cook (Vega Press, 1993). *Lambda Book Report*. September/October 1993.

- “Legacy” and “Lasius Niger.” *Sojourner: Black Gay Voices in the Age of AIDS*. Ed. B. Michael Hunter (NY: Other Countries Press, 1993), Fiction.
- “The Book of Luke.” *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men*. Ed. Essex Hemphill (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1991), Fiction.
- “Immortally Yours.” *Shadows of Love: American Gay Fiction*. Ed. Charles Jurrst (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1988), Fiction.

Prof. Foster’s dissertation, “Love’s Future Structures? The Dilemma of Interracial Coupling in Postwar African American Literature,” at Brown University, challenged “the widespread assumption that post-World War II representations of interracial coupling function primarily to index social conflict between black and white Americans.” Foster countered this assertion by selecting “three black-authored novels that take up this theme and place them at the intersection of contemporary feminist and lesbian/gay critical discourse, as well as Whiteness Studies.” Foster saw these three works as “engaged with and contesting historically bound, and essentialist, gender and sexual assumptions in ways that collide with and destabilize conventional understandings of such depictions.”

Prof. Foster’s subsequent publications have pursued these themes and his course work seems to be fully centered on his line of research. “Love and Trouble: Black Women Writers” explores “sexism, group loyalty, racial authenticity, intra- and interracial desire, homosexuality, the intertextual unfolding of a literary tradition of black female writing, as well as how these writings relate to canonical African American male-authored texts and European American literary traditions.” “(Re) Writing Black Masculinities” grants that “black and white males share a genital sameness,” but black males have been forced to inhabit “a culturally subjugated gender identity.” The course asks, what are “the modes of production” of the gender identity of black males? His “Introduction to LGBTQ Fiction” uses an “intersectional approach” to “classic and more contemporary lesbigay, trans, and queer fictional texts of the last one hundred years.” His “James Baldwin” course is the most direct reproduction of his dissertation, which covered Baldwin extensively. The course posits, like the dissertation, that Baldwin’s fiction and non-fiction challenged “static” racial, gender, and sexual politics.

4- Doris Santoro

Title: Associate Professor of Education, tenured 2013¹¹⁹³

Teaches:

- EDUC101 “Contemporary American Education” (Fall 2008, Fall 2011)

¹¹⁹³All material cited in this section can be accessed on “Doris Santoro” faculty page, Bowdoin College, Department of Education, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/faculty/d/santoro/>; except for any course descriptions or courses listed under “Teaches” which were cited from Bowdoin’s recent catalogs; and references to Santoro’s dissertation, “The Space for Good Teaching,” Columbia University, Teacher’s College, 2005, which are taken from Proquest Dissertations and Theses, an online database, <http://www.umi.com/en-US/catalogs/databases/detail/pqdt.shtml>.

- EDUC203 “Educating All Students” (Fall 2008, Fall 2009, Spring 2012, Fall 2012, Spring 2013)
- EDUC211 “Education and the Human Condition” (Spring 2011, Fall 2011)
- EDUC212 “Gender, Sexuality, and Schooling” (Fall 2012)
- EDUC215 “Adolescents in School” (Spring 2012)
- EDUC302 “Student Teaching Practicum” (Fall 2009, Spring 2013)
- EDUC304 “Bowdoin Teacher Scholars Seminar” (Spring 2013)
- EDUC304 “Senior Seminar: Analysis of Teaching and Learning” (Fall 2009, Spring 2011)

Research Interests:

“Professor Santoro’s philosophical inquiry is centered around the experiences of teachers and analyzed through the lens of John Dewey’s work and feminist theories. She investigates the moral, ethical, and political implications of pedagogical stances such as social justice education and student-centered teaching. Her current work examines the moral and ethical reasons experienced teachers give for leaving high-poverty schools.”

Publications:

- Santoro, D. A. & Wilson, T. S., eds. (forthcoming special journal issue). Philosophical Enquiry through Empirical Research. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*.
- Santoro, D. A. (In press). “I Was Becoming Increasingly Uneasy about the Profession and What Was Being Asked of Me”: Preserving Integrity in Teaching. *Curriculum Inquiry*.
- Margolis, J. & Santoro, D. A. (Under review). A Call to Reconsider Teacher Resilience.
- Santoro, D. A. & Dorn, C. (2012). “A Vital, Free, Independent and Lay Republic”: John Dewey and the Role of Education in Establishing the Turkish State. *Teaching America to the World: Education and Foreign Relations since 1870*, R. Garlitz & L. Jarvinen, eds., New York: Palgrave Macmillan (pp. 93–110).
- Santoro, D. A. (2011). Good Teaching in Difficult Times: Demoralization in the Pursuit of Good Work. *American Journal of Education* 188, no. 1 (pp. 1–23).
- Santoro, D. A. with Morehouse, L. (2011). Teaching’s Conscientious Objectors: Principled Leavers of High-Poverty Schools. *Teachers College Record* 113, no. 12 (pp. 2671–2705).

- Dorn, C. & Santoro, D. A. (2011). Political Goals and Social Ideals: Dewey, Democracy, and the Emergence of the Turkish Republic. *Education and Culture* 27, no. 2 (pp. 3–27).
- Santoro, D. A. (2011). Review of Sharon Todd, *Toward an Imperfect Education: Facing Humanity, Rethinking Cosmopolitanism*. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30, no. 3 (pp. 303–310).
- Santoro, D. (2010). Teaching to Save the World: Avoiding Circles of Certainty in Social Justice Pedagogy. *Philosophy of Education* 2009. Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society (pp. 241-249).
- Santoro, D. (2009). To Form a More Perfect Union: Citizenship and the Marriage of Sophie and Emile. *Philosophy of Education* 2008, Ronald D. Glass, ed. Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society (pp. 365-367).
- Santoro Gómez, D. (2008). Women’s Proper Place and Student-Centered Pedagogy. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 27, no. 5 (pp. 313–333).
- Santoro Gómez, D. (2006). The Need to Develop Independent Intelligence: The Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher Educators. *Teacher Education & Practice* 19, no. 4 (pp. 483–501). Special Issue: Teacher Education Today: What Would Dewey Say?
- Mackler, S. & Santoro, D. (2003). Thinking what we cannot see: Performance, education, and the value of the invisible. In Scott Fletcher (Ed.), *Philosophy of Education* (pp. 114–121). Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society. (Authorship was shared equally.)
- Santoro, Doris. “Tribes: Teaching Multicultural Myths & Legends.” (Curriculum for mainstream and learning-disabled inclusion classrooms.)

As her self-described research interests illustrate, Prof. Santoro’s scholarship focuses on the “experience of teachers” as understood by “John Dewey’s work and feminist theories.” This is, in fact, the focus of her 2005 dissertation, “The Space for Good Teaching,” at Columbia University, Teacher’s College. Her dissertation is divided into two parts. In the first part, she challenges the place of “student-centered pedagogy” in the classroom. Student-centered pedagogy, she argues, is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, student-centered pedagogy has been used by feminist educators to confront “traditional” or “masculinist” student-teacher relationships (a confrontation of which Santoro approves). But, on the other hand, student-centered pedagogy has “marginalized” the classroom instructor, a status which she likens to “bygone visions of domestic femininity” (a status of which Santoro disapproves). In the second half of her dissertation, she draws on John Dewey and “feminist theorists who have thought deeply about the impact of spatial metaphors on our lives,” and uses them to theorize how teachers might escape that “marginality.” She seeks to recover the feminist project in the classroom and to liberate the teacher from the “places” where they have been (metaphorically or

otherwise) confined. She argues that “there can be no predetermined place for good teaching. Rather, there must be space for teachers to educate responsively and responsibly.”

The clearest example of Santoro’s research interests influencing her curriculum is EDUC212, “Gender, Sexuality, and Schooling,” described in the 2012–2013 *Bowdoin College Catalogue*:

Schools are sites where young people learn to “do” gender and sexuality through direct instruction, the hidden curriculum, and peer-to-peer learning. In schools, gender and sexuality are challenged, constrained, constructed, normalized, and performed. Explores instructional and curricular reforms that have attempted to address students’ and teachers’ sexual identities and behavior. Examines the effects of gender and sexual identity on students’ experience of school, their academic achievement, and the work of teaching. Topics may include Compulsory Heterosexuality in the Curriculum; The Gender of the Good Student and Good Teacher; Sex Ed in an Age of Abstinence.¹¹⁹⁴

V. Partisan Politics

On December 7, 2012, the *Orient* reported that, according to data gathered by the Federal Election Commission (FEC), “One hundred percent of the donations made by Bowdoin faculty and staff in November’s presidential election benefitted President Obama’s campaign.”¹¹⁹⁵ According to the FEC, eighty-one donations were made to support Barack Obama, totaling \$5,300. The amount seems modest, but the one-sidedness of the destination of the contributions is remarkable.

VI. Grade Inflation

Grade inflation devalues academic study. If As and Bs are easy to come by, few students will strive for excellence. At Bowdoin inflation in grades goes hand-in-glove with the decline in the average number of hours students study. As documented above, Jonathan Goldstein’s study of classes from 2002 to 2007 showed that Bowdoin students study an average of 17.4 hours per week.¹¹⁹⁶ That figure is about half the national average at top colleges from a generation earlier.

What causes grade inflation? It is a hard question to answer precisely, though it is relatively easy to see the contributing factors. Students accustomed to seeing higher education as a consumer good demand higher grades. Colleges dependent on tuition income fear to disappoint their “customers.” Faculty members sometimes feel subtle and not so subtle pressure from

¹¹⁹⁴*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 118.

¹¹⁹⁵Emma Peters, “100% of Faculty Donations Go to Obama, FEC Reports,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 7, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7816>.

¹¹⁹⁶Jonathan Goldstein, “The Tradeoff between Extra-Curricular Activities and the Academic Mission of Small Liberal Arts Colleges: Why Some Schools Are Poor Educational Investments,” unpublished paper, August 19, 2008; rev. February 11, 2009, 2–3.

administrators to “go easy.” Students confronted with a professor who grades hard complain that this puts them at a competitive disadvantage for getting into good graduate programs because students at other colleges get the benefit of grade inflation. “Mismatch” plays a significant role, too. In order to pass students whose performances are substandard, professors have to crowd all the average students into higher grades. And Bowdoin has one more factor in play: its deep dislike of anything that threatens the egalitarian spirit of the college. True academic distinction in the form of top grades to only a handful of top students would run against the grain of the Bowdoin community.

On January 25, 2002, Gregory DeCoster and James Hornsten, then Bowdoin professors of economics, published in the *Orient* an analysis of grade inflation at Bowdoin between the academic years 1991–1992 and 2000–2001.¹¹⁹⁷ In the selected years, only the number of As that were awarded by faculty members increased in percentage; Bs, Cs, Ds and Fs all decreased in percentage. By 2000–2001, As became the largest percentage of grades awarded, at 44.7 percent. In 1991–1992, As and Bs comprised 78.2 percent of the total grades awarded; in 2000–2001, As and Bs made up 87.1 percent of the total grades awarded. In 1991–1992, As, Bs, and Cs constituted 96.3 percent of the total grades awarded; in 2000–2001, As, Bs, and Cs rose to 98.2 percent of the total grades awarded.

Figure 58: Grade Inflation at Bowdoin, 1991–1992 to 2000–2001

Grade	1991–1992	1992–1993	1993–1994	1994–1995	1995–1996	1996–1997	1997–1998	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001
A	3,337	3,729	3,756	3,914	4,490	4,458	4,713	5,114	5,159	5,543
% total	32.3	35.1	34.5	36.4	38.6	38.5	38.8	41.9	41.8	44.7
B	4,785	5,033	5,152	5,031	5,323	5,310	5,605	5,380	5,497	5,262
% total	45.8	47.4	47.3	46.8	45.7	44.9	46.1	44.0	44.6	42.4
C	1,891	1,611	1,751	1,566	1,601	1,679	1,628	1,509	1,452	1,377
% total	18.1	15.2	16.1	14.6	13.8	14.2	13.4	12.3	11.8	11.1
D	289	176	173	167	159	193	145	155	170	156
% total	2.8	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.3
F	100	74	61	69	65	87	67	61	55	72
% total	1.0	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.6
Total	10,422	10,623	10,893	10,747	11,638	11,817	12,158	12,219	12,333	12,410

DeCoster and Hornsten sought to locate the centers of grade inflation by evaluating the grades awarded in individual departments and broad distribution areas. As of 2000–2001, the highest mean grade, 3.70, was awarded by faculty members in women’s studies. In the social and behavioral sciences division, faculty in the anthropology department awarded the highest mean

¹¹⁹⁷Gregory DeCoster and Jim Hornsten, “Grade Inflation: An Economic Analysis,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 25, 2002, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2002-01-25/features03.htm>. All citations of this work are taken from this source.

grade, 3.49. In the natural science and mathematics division, faculty in the geology department, since renamed Earth and oceanographic science, awarded the highest mean grade, 3.62. In the humanities and fine arts division, faculty in the Russian department awarded the highest mean grade, 3.62.

Conversely, in 2000–2001, computer science faculty awarded the lowest mean grade, 2.89. In social and behavioral sciences, economics department faculty awarded the lowest mean grade, 3.04. In the humanities and fine arts division, philosophy department faculty awarded the lowest mean grade, 3.08. And in the interdisciplinary programs, Asian studies faculty awarded the lowest mean grade, 3.26.

It turns out that while grades were inflating throughout Bowdoin during those years, not every department saw increased mean grades. In fact, some decreased during that span. While the mean grade of twenty-two departments and programs at Bowdoin increased between academic years 1998–1999 and 2000–2001, the mean grade of eight departments and programs decreased. One remained static. The mean average of eleven departments increased by at least .10 points—most notably women’s studies (+.47), geology (+.29), psychology (+.26) Spanish (+.25), and Italian (+.37).

Figure 59: Humanities/Fine Arts Distribution of Grades by Year, 1998–1999 to 2000–2001

	Mean Grade			Percentage of “A” and “B” Grades		
	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001
Art History	3.21	3.21	3.32	84.0	81.8	89.8
Visual Arts	3.55	3.61	3.56	95.4	95.9	94.2
Classics	3.57	3.38	3.48	93.4	86.5	91.4
Education	3.40	3.33	3.44	93.3	94.6	94.4
English	3.30	3.21	3.29	90.8	85.6	89.7
Film Studies	3.32	3.26	3.27	95.0	89.9	94.9
German	3.40	3.56	3.58	90.3	94.9	96.0
History	3.22	3.22	3.16	89.4	88.6	82.9
Music	3.52	3.52	3.37	90.4	90.5	88.5
Philosophy	2.97	2.97	3.08	79.1	80.4	82.1
Religion	3.19	3.14	3.19	82.9	85.1	85.6
French	3.39	3.41	3.41	92.1	94.7	93.9
Italian	3.17	3.46	3.54	83.0	89.7	94.0
Spanish	3.27	3.39	3.52	91.6	92.1	96.4
Russian	3.58	3.67	3.62	97.5	100.0	98.5
Dance	3.12	3.28	3.49	84.4	89.7	91.1
Theater	3.42	3.52	3.45	94.4	97.6	92.1

Figure 60: Natural Sciences/Math Distribution of Grades by Year, 1998–1999 to 2000–2001

	Mean Grade			Percentage of “A” and “B” Grades		
	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001
Biology	3.14	3.17	3.33	80.7	82.4	87.0
Chemistry	3.03	3.07	3.05	74.0	78.4	74.1
Computer Science	3.00	2.94	2.89	71.8	71.0	71.4
Geology*	3.34	3.42	3.63	92.4	90.0	97.0
Math	3.02	3.15	3.11	76.1	82.6	82.5
Physics	3.15	3.16	3.06	84.2	81.5	77.0

*Geology was renamed Earth and Oceanographic Science.

Figure 61: Social/Behavioral Sciences Distribution of Grades by Year, 1998–1999 to 2000–2001

	Mean Grade			Percentage of “A” and “B” Grades		
	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001
Economics	3.03	3.01	3.04	75.6	75.0	77.1
Government	3.18	3.22	3.24	83.9	86.6	87.8
Psychology	3.13	3.27	3.39	82.2	83.4	87.1
Anthropology	3.45	3.44	3.49	90.4	92.7	91.1
Sociology	3.35	3.47	3.44	89.7	94.5	93.2
Economics	3.03	3.01	3.04	75.6	75.0	77.1

Figure 62: Interdisciplinary Programs Distribution of Grades by Year, 1998–1999 to 2000–2001

	Mean Grade			Percentage of “A” and “B” Grades		
	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001
Asian Studies	3.42	3.28	3.26	94.8	92.0	86.3
Environmental Studies	3.23	3.25	3.34	84.2	88.4	86.0
Women’s Studies	3.23	3.31	3.70	88.7	92.7	99.0

DeCoster and Hornsten found these trends troubling:

If high ability students possess a distinct advantage in the competition for grades, then attaining high grades can be a straightforward means to signal ability level to interested outside observers (prospective employers, graduate schools, etc.). However, for grades to provide a significant amount of information to outsiders, it is necessary that lower ability students not be able to feign high ability by achieving a high grade point average. Unfortunately, this is exactly what is currently happening at Bowdoin due to rampant grade inflation.

They feared that because of grade inflation the statistical accomplishments of high-ability students would be obscured. This, DeCoster and Hornsten concluded, was a disincentive for the brightest students to excel. And this, they argued, would not only harm individual students, but the intellectual quality of Bowdoin as a whole:

Their attention to academic pursuits will likely be diminished resulting in a decline in the intellectual environment at the College. These consequences of grade inflation harm us all.

DeCoster and Hornsten further concluded that the different grading cultures that existed within departments would enable weaker students to mask their academic deficiency by gravitating toward easier programs:

Relatively weaker students most need opportunities to mask their true ability level through attainment of high grades. Hoping to enhance their GPAs, they will gravitate to departments offering the combination of high mean/low variance grading.

On the other hand, the brightest students would gravitate to the more difficult programs because they needed to be challenged and to distinguish themselves intellectually. This would cause their grades to be relatively lower than the weaker students enrolled in weaker programs—thus causing an inversion of the meaning of the GPA and a devaluation of the grading system at Bowdoin. DeCoster and Hornsten granted that some have argued that the general improvement of the grades is due to an increase of high-ability students across the board. But even if that were true, they pointed out, the institutionalized disparity and confusion connected with student grades still rendered Bowdoin’s grading system incapable of indicating the relative quality of individual students.

There are several other examples of less systematic data that indicates that Bowdoin’s faculty continues to generate inflated grades. At the February 4, 2002, faculty meeting, the minutes record that Paul Schaffner, associate professor of psychology, “expressed concern over an email sent from the office of Dean Hazlett to faculty about the performance of first year students. Prof. Schaffner was concerned about grade inflation in that 80% of the grades were A’s and B’s while 11 to 12% of the grades were C’s.”¹¹⁹⁸

In spring 2002, the Bowdoin faculty added “+ and -” to the college’s grading scale. A systematic appraisal of the new +/- system released in February 2003 revealed that the new system enabled faculty members to decrease the number of “D” grades from ninety-two to sixty-five. A faculty member speculated: “perhaps because more C-’s were being given instead.”¹¹⁹⁹

¹¹⁹⁸Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, February 4, 2002, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹¹⁹⁹Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, February 3, 2003, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

In October 2005 the *Orient* reported that:

According to Director of Institutional Research and Registrar Christine Cote, the average grade increases every year. The average grade earned by students has increased from 3.20 to 3.33 on a four-point scale in the last ten years.¹²⁰⁰

In November 2011 Nick Daniels (Class of 2012), editor-in-chief of the *Orient* (2011–2012), begged the Bowdoin faculty to inflate the grades even further. His plea began with a review of the history of grade inflation at Bowdoin:

Twenty years ago, the average GPA at the school was 3.06, around 46 percent of all grades given out were in the B range, and 32 percent were in the A range. A decade later, in the 2001–2002 academic year, the average GPA of the student body was a lusty 3.30, just a hair below a B-plus average. By then, just over 87 percent of grades were either As or Bs. Plus and minus modifiers weren't introduced until 2003, to great student indignation. At the time, students fretted that professors' use of modifiers would result in generally lower marks, but grade inflation plodded on undisturbed by this development. By 2007, 49 percent of all the grades doled out were in the A range, and only 8 percent were a C or lower.¹²⁰¹

Daniels's hunger for inflated grades was not abated by this incredible arc. Rather, he complained that Bowdoin was lagging behind its peer colleges in inflating grades. His argument was that by inflating the grades, Bowdoin would be able to strengthen the position of its graduates in the job market. Daniels acknowledged, "If graduate programs and employers get wind of unrestrained inflation, it may devalue that school's degree," but added:

However, since elite private colleges can plausibly claim to have superior students, it follows that their students should have the best grades.¹²⁰²

We do not expect the Bowdoin faculty to act on Daniels's proposal, but the willingness of the editor-in-chief of the *Bowdoin Orient* to inveigh in favor of still greater grade inflation—and not in the spirit of satire—testifies to the degree of complacency among students faced with a system of academic evaluation that lacks any real capacity to distinguish mediocrity from excellence.

VII. Advising

Every student at Bowdoin has a faculty advisor and every full-time faculty member is potentially an advisor. All incoming students are assigned an advisor. By the end of his sophomore year, each student has a new advisor, who is a member of the department in which

¹²⁰⁰Miranda Yaver, "Grade Inflation a Bowdoin Reality," *Bowdoin Orient*, October 28, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1291>.

¹²⁰¹Nick Daniels, "The Game of Grade Inflation," *Bowdoin Orient*, November 11, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6804>.

¹²⁰²*Ibid.*

the student has declared a major.

The advising system attests that the Bowdoin faculty never fully abandoned the idea that coherence was a necessary component of a liberal arts education. But they replaced an older form of coherence with a newer form. The older form was a meticulously prescribed series of undergraduate requirements that were seen as intellectually beneficial for all students. The newer form treats coherence as something that emerges organically from the individual student's quest for knowledge. The locus of coherence in the older system was the curriculum shaped by the collective wisdom of the faculty. The locus of coherence in the new system is the mind of the undergraduate student.

The older system relied on a faculty that possessed the breadth of liberal learning to reach generally accepted decisions about intellectual priorities and proportions. The newer system emphasizes the individual faculty member as a source of advice and counsel to the individual student in the midst of self-discovery. Thus, as Bowdoin shifted from one model of "coherence" to another, the role of faculty advisor became paramount.

Faculty members, of course, have always been sources of advice and counsel to students, but in Bowdoin's 1964–1965 *College Bulletin*, for example, there is no mention of a formal faculty advising system. At that time it was supposed that Bowdoin students, *Bulletin* in hand, could chart their own way through the college's requirements and options. The new system, by contrast, stands in a pivotal position: "Academic advising is perhaps the most important means by which the student, with the aid of a faculty member, organizes his or her academic experience over the course of four years at college."¹²⁰³

One of the links between faculty and students in the new scheme is, in principle, the shared interest of faculty members and students in acts of discovery. Faculty members, as researchers, are charged with the discovery of new knowledge or original creative expression. A byproduct of their research is a curriculum that is continually renewed by their original inquiry. The old system supposed a faculty that commanded intellectual breadth; the new system supposes a faculty made up mainly of specialists who appeal to students on the basis of the intrinsic interest of their particular specialties.

Students as individuals encounter the variety of courses offered by the college and, by adapting and redirecting their choices in light of what they have already studied, bit by bit create the kind of coherence that President Howell and the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee (CEP) imagined to be possible outside a framework of prescribed courses and other requirements. We have called this homemade order "emergent coherence." That "coherence" would in fact "emerge" was what they hoped would happen. Their view was that the safeguard against students' "over-concentration" on favored subjects was the wise counsel of faculty

¹²⁰³*The Bowdoin College Self-Study 1996*, 95, catalog no. 1.29, folders 10–30, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

advisors. “Emergent coherence” required this degree of external governance.

According to the 1970 “Requirements for the Degree”:

Courses, it is assumed, do not simply lead to other courses in the same subject, but properly taught they raise questions and evoke a curiosity that other disciplines must satisfy. The movement from subject to subject occurs...because the student finds the movement right for his intellectual needs.¹²⁰⁴

Emergent coherence is the ability of the student to accurately identify pertinent questions raised by courses and to choose the next steps accordingly.

In her 2006 convocation address, dean for academic affairs Cristle Collins Judd offered another name for this process. She called it “serendipitous discovery,” which, drawing on the sixteenth-century tale that introduced the word *serendipity*, she defined as “unexpected discovery through keen insight.”¹²⁰⁵ Judd, in fact, was sharply aware of the challenges that face Bowdoin students when they consider the college’s sprawling variety of courses:

As you first years have chosen and registered for courses over the last couple of days, the specificity of many of the titles may have given you pause. For in our day and age, the pursuit of knowledge, the so-called “life of the mind,” seems indelibly marked by specialization and, with it, a sense of fragmentation and the potential for being overwhelmed by rapid change and the production of new information. This even as the catch phrases across academic culture these days are words like “interdisciplinary” study and “integrated” learning.¹²⁰⁶

Judd’s answer to the fragmentation and entropy was “serendipitous discovery” based on “keen insight.”

Presumably because “keen insight” is not a universal quality, students need help in recognizing the right questions and next steps. Faculty advisors are supposed to fill that gap, but many—faculty and students alike—judge the system as inadequate. In the years since its institution, it has been the most consistently maligned component of the undergraduate experience at Bowdoin College (especially the first two years of advising) and the college has attempted many times to improve it.

Three issues stand out: intellectual narrowness, faculty disengagement, and student apathy. The 1982 and 2004 attempts to reinstate “a modest set of distribution and division

¹²⁰⁴“Requirements for the Degree,” memorandum of Committee on Curriculum and Educational Policy, Bowdoin College, April 7, 1970, catalog no. 1.7.4, vol. 4, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹²⁰⁵Cristle Collins Judd, “Convocation 2006 Address: Serendipity, Knowledge, Community,” *Campus News*, August 30, 2006, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1bowdoincampus/003372.shtml>.

¹²⁰⁶Ibid.

requirements” were explicitly aimed to combat the readiness of students to narrow their studies.¹²⁰⁷

As for faculty disengagement, according to the 1996 *Self-Study*:

With disturbing frequency, students complained that faculty advisors were sometimes not available, that they were often not very well informed, that they frequently took only a perfunctory interest in their advisees, sometimes only signing their registration cards, and that they didn’t take much initiative in the advising relationship.¹²⁰⁸

Faculty members were somewhat reluctant to shoulder the blame, and yet

a number of faculty also confessed that they were uncertain about their role in advising and that they frequently did not possess enough information to answer students’ specific questions.¹²⁰⁹

Student apathy is, from the point of view of many faculty members, the larger problem. The 1996 *Self-Study* noted that some faculty members “felt that a good deal of the problem with advising stems from students not taking enough responsibility for seeking out help.”¹²¹⁰ At the May 19, 2003, faculty meeting, then associate professor of anthropology Scott MacEachern presented the CEP’s “Report on Advising,” which identified as the central problem

a lack of preparedness and lack of student seriousness in planning their education, particularly at the pre-major level.¹²¹¹

The mutual recriminations of faculty and students over the advising system suggest that the “lively association” between the faculty members and students the *Student Handbook* describes has little basis in reality.

At the May 1, 2006, faculty meeting, Craig McEwen, then dean for academic affairs, reflected on the improvements made to academic advising since the 1996 *Self-Study*. Changes included:

incoming students who may need special support are identified; advisee files now contain a relevant questionnaire; and new advisors participate in a formal training program. We have also created advisor’s workshop during orientation, which has mixed attendance and reception.¹²¹²

¹²⁰⁷*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 16.

¹²⁰⁸*Bowdoin College Self-Study 1996*, 95.

¹²⁰⁹*Ibid.*

¹²¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹²¹¹Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 19, 2003, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

¹²¹²Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, May 1, 2006, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

But his overall assessment was not favorable. Dean McEwen was paraphrased thus: “[W]e’ve made some progress, but many of the issues identified in 1996 remain.”¹²¹³

Several students who were invited to attend the meeting voiced their frustrations. Eleanor Connolly (Class of 2008) was paraphrased by the May 1, 2006, faculty minutes:

[T]he student pre-major advising system did not work for her. She was looking for a professor to have a friendship with. She said she asked her advisor to go to lunch, but that he didn’t get back to her.¹²¹⁴

Connolly added: “[P]eople come to Bowdoin because it is a community, and they are looking for a friendly atmosphere.” Christian Adams (Class of 2009) was paraphrased as saying that “when he registered for courses, he only received minimal information from his advisor. He said that advice from other students was helpful, in part because students will be frank whereas faculty members are hesitant to trash their colleagues.”¹²¹⁵

David Collings, professor of English, summarized some of the difficulties facing Bowdoin’s advising system, acknowledging some of the assumptions behind the advising scheme:

Bowdoin’s general education requirements are minimal, and many majors are the same, on the theory that advising will make a difference. We have implicitly agreed that advising is doing more than taking care of the basics.¹²¹⁶

Collings also acknowledged that, because Bowdoin’s educational priorities are ambiguous, he was unsure of how to guide students in certain areas. For example, he was uncertain of the college’s “institutional stance on questions like whether students should double-major.” “Our institutional priorities are vague,” he said. Collings expected students “to be open to conversation and to thinking about what education is for.” But he thought that, even if students made good faith efforts, the advising system was simply impractical: “Both during orientation in the fall and course sign-up in the spring, we are ridiculously busy. If we are talking about having substantive interaction and friendship, then we have a problem of how to do that in logistical terms.”¹²¹⁷

The 2006 *Self-Study* took note of Bowdoin’s previous accreditation self-study and observed that the problems with the advising system remained:

The 1996 *Self-Study* reported evidence of limited and perfunctory meetings between advisors and students—both for pre-majors and majors—and raised questions about the efficacy of the advising system then in place. Although the College has made some

¹²¹³Ibid.

¹²¹⁴Ibid.

¹²¹⁵Ibid

¹²¹⁶Ibid

¹²¹⁷Ibid.

significant changes to support advising, and working groups have reflected deeply about the advising process, student (and our own) satisfaction with advising remains lower than we would like.¹²¹⁸

Bowdoin's accreditor, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, agreed. In its June 6, 2007, "Commission Letter" announcing Bowdoin's re-accreditation, the NEASC urged Bowdoin to give emphasis to "strengthening the advising program, particularly for first- and second-year students."¹²¹⁹

On September 19, 2007, the Bowdoin Student Government discussed their hopes for the advising system. A student named "Rutledge" hoped that advisors would begin to seek more "personal" relationships with their advisees. He thought that an improved advising system would allow Bowdoin "to cash in on something that Bowdoin makes a big deal about, which is the possibility of relationships with professors. This could be a case of faculty entering freshmans' [sic] lives." "Houston," additionally, thought that his experience with his advisor was "less-than-welcoming." He said, "It was like 'hurry up and get those classes picked, come back and let's go.' It's about speed and paper. A better first meeting, something more expansive than 'let's do this' would be nice."¹²²⁰

In Bowdoin's 2011 *Fifth Year Report*, the college described in detail changes that it made since the 2006 *Self-Study*. The basic two-part advising scheme remains intact, but some additional aids have been provided for faculty members and students, including a program during New Student Orientation "designed to educate first-year students about their responsibilities" in the adviser-advisee "partnership." The faculty has a "similar discussion...at the Faculty Breakfast during Orientation."¹²²¹

In 2008, to help Bowdoin faculty members get a better grasp on the curriculum and on their advising responsibilities, the Office of Academic Affairs produced a seventy-two-page *Academic Advising Handbook*. It clarified Bowdoin's degree requirements to faculty and even offered "suggested agenda topics."¹²²² It provided the faculty members with broad descriptions of each department and program and recommendations of classes that a student might take in his first and second year. The *Handbook* also offered tips on manners during advising. For instance, faculty members are told that it is

¹²¹⁸*The Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2006), 35.

¹²¹⁹"NEASC Commission Letter," June 6, 2007, Bowdoin College, Academic Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/commission-letter.shtml>.

¹²²⁰Minutes of the Bowdoin Student Government, Bowdoin College, September 19, 2007, <http://students.bowdoin.edu/bsg/files/2012/09/Minutes-September-19.pdf>.

¹²²¹Bowdoin College, *New England Association of Schools and Colleges Fifth Year Report* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2011), 14.

¹²²²*Academic Advising Handbook 2008–2009*, 23–27.

important to appear unhurried, interested and concerned when meeting advisees. Many first-year students report that their faculty advisors are wonderful people but “too busy” to handle their problems.¹²²³

The *Handbook* also reminded faculty members not to make the students too reliant on the advisor-advisee relationship. The student should be encouraged “to seek information from as many sources as possible in order to be able to make reasonable academic choices.”

Bowdoin also provides its advisors with a twenty-one-page *Pre-Major Academic Advising Tip Sheet*—a guide to help faculty members get a basic grasp of all academic departments.¹²²⁴

¹²²³Ibid., 23.

¹²²⁴“Pre-Major Academic Advising Tip Sheet for Advisors: 2012–2013,” Bowdoin College, Academic Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/curriculum-teaching/tipsheet.shtml>.

Conclusion

What Bowdoin Doesn't Teach

“Tell me what it is I don't know.” That was the challenge laid down by a Bowdoin student on May 16, 2011. This report is our answer. We have documented what Bowdoin teaches, both through formal instruction and through the informal pathways of life in a campus community. What a college teaches and what a particular student “knows” are, of course, not one and the same. The student knows many things the college doesn't teach, but the challenge was really whether we could show that a Bowdoin education is deficient in any significant way. Are Bowdoin students so well educated that the gaps are small and incidental?

We have attempted to answer this question by meticulous attention to the substance of a Bowdoin education. Bowdoin's formal educational offerings are copious, and if that were the only measure of educational breadth and abundance, Bowdoin would pass any reasonable test. But there is more to an education than a large variety of courses. As measured by the spectrum of ideas and intellectual opinions that receive serious attention within the campus community, whether in the classroom or in the community at large, Bowdoin presents a much narrower offering.

Various observers have noted that a student who is determined to study great works of literature; key epochs in history; the abiding achievements and faultlines of civilizations; the central ideas in philosophy, politics, and economics; and the foundational concepts of science and mathematics can find professors, courses, and programs at Bowdoin that are equal to the student's ambition.¹²²⁵ And by and large this is true, although a student would have to stumble onto a good advisor or possess considerable foreknowledge of both these subjects and the Bowdoin curriculum to chart such a path. And it would be far easier in some subjects than others.

Some departments, such as government and most of the natural sciences, offer a fairly clear path to a broad understanding of their subjects. Many other departments offer either a kaleidoscopic collection of courses or a path to a peculiarly partisan construction of their subjects.

Our examination of the academic instruction at Bowdoin took note of the epochal moment in the college's history—in 1969—when the administration decided to abolish all general education requirements. We traced the reverberations of that decision across the decades, as Bowdoin faculty members struggled with students who could not write well, were deficient in math, neglected foreign languages, ignored the sciences, or over-specialized. These deficiencies ironically became more prominent as Bowdoin's reputation for academic rigor increased, as the

¹²²⁵As for the curriculum, a Bowdoin insider says, “The kids who want a conservative education can find it. There are enough good courses. But it is navigating through a system that doesn't provide much guidance.” John P. Zmirak, ed., *The ISI Guide 2006: Choosing the Right College* (Wilmington, DE: ISI, 2006), 29.

college enrolled larger cohorts of National Merit Scholars, and as the reported average SAT scores of Bowdoin matriculants rose. The outward appearance of academic strength masked an internal disorder that was, however, recognized by the faculty (as a formal body) as it convened one commission after another to deal with the fallout of the 1969 revolution.

Many of Bowdoin's faculty members came to see the high intellectual cost of a vertiginous curriculum in which students were spun off in every direction but were provided with no common intellectual base. The absence of a shared intellectual life among students grew to be a problem for which the college struggled for solutions: Distribution requirements? More advising by faculty members? Better advising? Close the fraternities? Require first-year seminars? All of these and more were proposed and enacted without getting at the heart of the problem. Beginning in 1969, Bowdoin had made the Bowdoin student the autonomous authority on the content of his education. Having turned the student into a consumer with complete freedom of choice, it became insurmountably difficult to declare that the college itself had both the better insight and the authority to require students to meet some substantive general education requirements.

The 1969 problem compounded because Bowdoin's dissolution of general education was married to an emerging model for faculty recruitment that emphasized research specialization over undergraduate teaching and breadth of knowledge. The liberty of the students to study whatever they pleased became the liberty of the faculty to teach their specializations. And indeed the faculty rapidly expanded in the direction of research specialists. As faculty members of the older generalist disposition retired, they were replaced with faculty members who owed their opportunities to Bowdoin's new pedagogical emphasis on students as sophisticated explorers of the frontiers of knowledge. The curriculum began to proliferate new courses reflecting the new faculty members' interests. As we have observed, between 1964 and 2010 Bowdoin's enrollments nearly doubled—but the number of courses it offered quadrupled.

This meant that faculty uneasiness with the consequences of the abolition of general education requirements ran into the wall of faculty self-interest. A system that catered to their research specializations prevailed over lingering concerns with the shapelessness of the students' education. This self-interest has calcified into administrative policy. Prof. Kristen Ghodsee, for instance, celebrated Bowdoin's "flexible leave policy" and "generous faculty-research funds" because it freed her to pursue her research and meant she would not be "prematurely smothered under an avalanche of needy undergraduates."¹²²⁶

The centrifugal results of redefining "liberal education" as (1) the sum of whatever choices individual students make and (2) the recasting of the faculty as primarily academic-specialists was further complicated by the rise of a new divide between two categories of students: those fully ready for college-level courses and—as Bowdoin phrases it—the

¹²²⁶Kristen Ghodsee, "A Research Career at a Liberal Arts College," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 25, 2008, <http://chronicle.com/article/A-Research-Career-at-a/45760/>.

“academically underprepared.” The notion of “preparedness,” as we discovered, is a euphemism. It gathers under one term students who may lack the intellectual ability to succeed in a college like Bowdoin, those who may be able but are not well-motivated, and others who arrive at Bowdoin with native ability and ambition but are far behind their classmates in what they already know. Some of the “academically underprepared” are athletes recruited to play varsity sports, but the problem of academic underpreparedness, as we learned in reviewing so many faculty minutes, is mainly a reflex of Bowdoin’s aggressive recruitment of minority students. Bowdoin finds itself with a dilemma born of its commitment to “diversity,” in that to achieve the percentages of minority students it would like to have it admits a substantial number of students who are academically at a level well below the average of the rest of the majority. This situation too feeds into the shaping of the curriculum. Bowdoin faces the problem of trying to shepherd students into remedial courses without requiring them.

When we ask what Bowdoin students don’t know, we are met first by the imposing prospect that the curriculum is seemingly open to anything and everything. Students are limited only by the time they can devote to any one subject.

That plentitude, however, is a mirage. Having a choice of hundreds of specialized courses doesn’t add up to a coherent curriculum or a liberal education. Bowdoin tacitly acknowledges this by claiming that beneath all the variety of subjects runs a river of common intellectual endeavor. It is the river of “critical thinking.” As we have observed, this term has talismanic qualities for Bowdoin. Everyone agrees—including us—that learning to think critically is an important goal of higher education, but the phrase has many and sometimes contradictory meanings and Bowdoin does little to clarify which of these meanings are relevant. To think critically is generally the opposite of taking something for granted, accepting an argument at face value, or insisting that something is above or beyond rational consideration.

Beyond this point exists disputes about where the burden of proof should lie in an argument and what kinds of assumptions can be posited without sliding into dogmatism. These are complicated issues that are closely intertwined with the history of Western civilization. The rise of Pythagorean mathematics, Aristotelian logic, and the proofs of Euclid stand as instances of new ideas emerging about how critical thought should proceed. When Copernicus theorized a heliocentric universe, the burden of proof fell on him to establish his point against the Ptolemaic model. The balance of who needs to show what to establish a point changes with the growth of knowledge. In this sense “critical thinking” isn’t defined once-and-for-all, but is shaped by advances in the disciplines. This allows for the possibility of new forms of critical thinking, but they cannot be created by fiat.

Bowdoin extols the ideal of critical thinking without sorting through these difficult issues. One instance we examined was the effort by Prof. Philip Camill (joint appointment in Earth and oceanographic science and environmental studies) to create “Environmental Literacy”

as a general education requirement. He called it a “critical frame of analysis” equal “to race, class, and gender.”¹²²⁷ Camill in this instance deploys the rhetoric of “critical thinking” to create another exemption from the list of things on which Bowdoin does not permit actual critical thinking. Environmental literacy, in his view, should be like race, class, and gender: terms that come at Bowdoin with fixed doctrine about what they mean and how they can be used, and are “critical” only in the sense that they are deployed to criticize existing social and political arrangements.

For example, gender and women’s studies announces in the *Bowdoin College Catalogue* that it proceeds “in light of the social construction of gender” and gender’s place “as an institutionalized means of structuring inequality and dominance.”¹²²⁸ This is plainly an instance of assuming what needs to be argued and shown, and such tendentiousness cannot qualify as “critical thinking” in any ordinary sense of the term. Bowdoin hides this failure with the bold claim that the assumption is itself an instance of “critical thinking.” Presumably this confuses two senses of the word. Criticizing is not necessarily an exercise in critical thinking. Often it is far from it.

The same perplexity runs through the other studies programs and, to varying degrees, through other academic departments that have embraced the idea that their role is to change the world rather than to help students understand it. This is a political goal and stands in stark contrast to the goals of liberal education as they have been traditionally understood. Occasionally a Bowdoin professor has taken note of the deeper problem. It is not that Bowdoin engages in “politics” in the form of campaigning for candidates or pushing for legislation—though that happens, too—but that Bowdoin gives privileged prominence to some political ideologies and squelches opposition to those views. As Paul Franco, professor of government, put it, “the real issue” is “the degree to which political ideology shapes the content of courses and determines what goes on in the classroom; the degree to which education becomes politics by other means.”¹²²⁹ Writing in 2004, Franco observed, “My reading of the current situation in higher education is that there is a fair amount of politicization of the curriculum in the humanities and the social sciences.”¹²³⁰

As we examined the curriculum, key concepts, student activities, student learning, and the faculty, we conceived our task to be not so much a department-by-department review of the curriculum but as a picture of a Bowdoin education. Taking Bowdoin “as a whole,” however,

¹²²⁷Philip Camill, “Environmental Literacy and the Academy,” *Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences Newsletter* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 5, <http://documents.clubexpress.com/documents.ashx?key=nNTZ2Xs4vYLhgLLUJTLgHQn8UX%2F6iJwqYILRjKGntmKOtSRlzRCaW2SWXV GZOpMIJ0g5z0nMYv1eTJKSJ%2Bo5mw%3D%3D>.

¹²²⁸*Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 173.

¹²²⁹Paul Franco, “Not Necessarily a Non-Issue,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, February 6, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-02-06/tr02.htm>.

¹²³⁰*Ibid.*

might sound like a contradiction. If Bowdoin has dissolved into every-student-his-own-curriculum and every-faculty-member-his-own-research-agenda, where is the whole?

The whole in one sense is Bowdoin's emphasis on "critical thinking," but the real answer is Bowdoin's emphasis on politics. Politics is enthroned at Bowdoin where Reason once reigned. Like all usurpers, this one presents itself as the legitimate heir of the old order. Bowdoin manages this substitution by claiming that Reason all along was political and that "truth claims," seen accurately through the lens of "critical thinking," are only assertions of self-interest by the powerful. Since everything has always been politics anyway, why not promote the politics you prefer? This is the short route to replacing open-minded liberal education with political activism centered on diversity, multiculturalism, same-sex marriage, sustainability, etc.

So, despite Bowdoin's lack of cohesive intellectual order, it is a "whole" and can be examined as something that possesses organic unity. In that light, our guiding questions were: What kinds of knowledge does Bowdoin emphasize or prize? What does it want all Bowdoin students to learn? What does it want all Bowdoin faculty members to teach? What intellectual habits and attitudes does it cultivate? What understanding of the unity of knowledge does it prompt students to recognize? What divisions of knowledge? What abiding perplexities and matters for lifelong study? What moral yearnings does it plant in the souls of students? How does it urge students to comprehend the self, and what qualities does it uphold as worthy of pursuit? What qualities are better restrained or overcome? How should we treat other people? What obligations do we have as citizens? What are our obligations of stewardship to the achievements of past generations? What are our obligations to the generations to come? What combination of knowledge and character represents an ideal toward which students should strive? What is the good life? What is the good society?

Bowdoin does not spend much time debating possible answers. Rather, it has settled doctrine that informs students what sorts of knowledge, habits, dispositions, and aspirations are desirable. What does Bowdoin want *all* students to learn? The importance of diversity, respect for "difference," sustainability, the social construction of gender, the need to obtain "consent," the common good, world citizenship, and critical thinking. The answers embedded in these terms are not, as we have discovered, arrived at by careful weighing of arguments and evidence. The general procedure has been for Bowdoin's president to announce a "commitment," such as President Mills's announcement in 2007 that he had signed the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment, or Bowdoin's 2009 release of its "Carbon Neutrality Implementation Plan." The same procedures underlie Bowdoin's creation of the studies programs, its commitment to minority student recruitment, and its determination to increase the number of minority and women faculty members.

All of these decisions may well have captured the prevailing views of Bowdoin faculty members and students. They might well have, therefore, prevailed in open debate. But as far as we can tell, there was no meaningful debate. Without hesitation, Bowdoin skips to certainties on

some of the most contentious issues of our time. What most should be subject to debate never is. When critical thinking is most necessary, it is most absent.

What happens at the level of college policy is reflected at the level of college culture. When Bowdoin speaks of the “common good,” when it promotes “diversity” and “inclusivity” and apotheosizes “difference,” it similarly bypasses debate on the ideas that are at the center of the great debates in America today. Rather than give these debates a respectful and full hearing, the college preempts them with closed-minded orthodoxies.

When Bowdoin makes each student an independent agent who has to choose his own way through a wilderness of courses, it bypasses the question of what students should study for the sake of the larger society. When Bowdoin elevates “consent” as the only operative principle in sexual relations, it bypasses the questions of the proper purposes of our sexuality and what we owe to ourselves and to one another in controlling our sexuality. When Bowdoin makes “sustainability” the general rubric through which students understand humanity’s relation to the natural world, it bypasses the question of whether progress and invention provide more reliable answers to the Malthusian dilemma. When Bowdoin upholds the ideal of students as “citizens of the world,” it bypasses the question of what students owe to their local communities and their country. When Bowdoin admits, appoints, and promotes individuals on the basis of race and ethnicity, it bypasses the question of how to uphold the principle of equality in a free society.

College education is always about more than the courses in the catalog. It is a complex fostering of knowledge, motivations, character, skills, attitudes, and commitments. Bowdoin presents a distinct collection of these welded into a characteristic whole. It teaches a lot, and leaves those who have sampled the extensive cafeteria offerings with the impression that they have eaten a well-balanced meal.

What does Bowdoin *not* teach? Intellectual modesty. Self-restraint. Hard work.¹²³¹ Virtue. Self-criticism. Moderation. A broad framework of intellectual history. Survey courses.¹²³² English composition.¹²³³ A course on Edmund Spenser. A course primarily on the American Founders.¹²³⁴ A course on the American Revolution.¹²³⁵ The history of Western civilization from classical times to the present. A course on the Christian philosophical tradition. Public speaking.

¹²³¹As documented by Prof. Jonathan Goldstein, contemporary Bowdoin students spend an average of 17.4 hours per week outside class studying, a fraction of the time spent by students in earlier generations. Jonathan Goldstein, “The Tradeoff between Extra-Curricular Activities and the Academic Mission of Small Liberal Arts Colleges: Why Some Schools Are Poor Educational Investments,” unpublished paper, August 19, 2008; rev. February 11, 2009.

¹²³²A few still exist. In 1964, 14 percent of Bowdoin courses were surveys. In fall 2011, only 1.6 percent of Bowdoin courses were survey courses.

¹²³³Bowdoin has repeatedly debated the need for such a course and rejected it in favor of first-year seminars, which offer a loose rubric for improving student writing.

¹²³⁴Prof. Jean Yarbrough teaches GOV250 “American Political Thought,” which “examines the political thought of American statesmen and writers from the founding to the 20th century.”

¹²³⁵Bowdoin offers courses on Latin American revolutions, the Cuban Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, and numerous other revolutions, but no course on the American Revolution.

Tolerance toward dissenting views. The predicates of critical thinking. A coherent body of knowledge. How to distinguish importance from triviality. Wisdom. Culture.

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