

SYMPOSIUM: Student Life

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***Editor's Note:** To get an inside view of campus life today, we approached the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, whose purpose is to foster in college students an appreciation of the values that sustain a free society. ISI supplied us with a list of their Collegiate Network editors, students who are active on their campuses, interested in the issues facing higher education, and concerned about the dominance of politically correct leftism in our intellectual and political life. They have all edited, and in some cases founded independent student newspapers with conservative, traditional, and/or libertarian bent and we are pleased that they are willing to share their experiences in our pages. We posed three main questions and left it up to each respondent to choose which question to answer and how to answer it:*

How does traditional American culture and Western civilization fare on your campus?

What are some of the obstacles or difficulties a traditionalist, conservative, or libertarian might find on your campus?

What can you tell us about the aesthetics of everyday life on your campus, from dating and sex, to dress and tastes, to behavior and mores?

Taken together, the eight responses below hit all three questions and offer a range of views based on the writers' personal experiences at a variety of institutions, secular and religious, public and private—Hillsdale to Harvard, so to speak. Our student editors offer illuminating slices of life from the American campus today, revealing struggles, satisfactions, some surprises, and how one professor can make a world of difference.

Beneath the Rungs: Locating the Liberal Arts at Harvard

Brian Bolduc

You can find the liberal arts at Harvard College—if you look for them.

Harvard requires students to study different subjects, but allows us to pick our courses. To meet the requirement in “Literature and Arts B,” for instance, students can take “History of Art and Architecture 152. Italian Renaissance Art” or “African and African American Studies 121. Please, Wake Up!—Race, Gender, Class and Ethnicity in the Early Films of Spike Lee.” In this academic supermarket, the liberal arts sit on the same shelf with current fads—and often get pushed to the back.

“Practical” classes, meanwhile, are pulled to the front. At Harvard, the three most popular majors are economics, government, and social studies. I am majoring in economics, and I think I understand the appeal. Students are interested in current affairs, and so these fields seem the most relevant.

Freshman year, I took one of the most popular courses, “Government 20: Introduction to Comparative Politics.” We covered such topics as industrialization in South Korea and the War in Iraq. Friends raved about the class, but I found that I had already gleaned much of the material from reading the *Wall Street Journal*.

Last summer, I wrote a guide to picking classes for the conservative biweekly, *The Harvard Salient*. For the article, I interviewed Harvey C. Mansfield, William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of Government, who said, “Take courses where the reading is in classics of the field, not books no one will read twenty years from now.” His advice was an epiphany. I decided to take such courses in the fall, and enrolled in “Government 1060: Ancient and Medieval Political Philosophy,” “English 54: English Romantic Poetry,” and “Music 1a: An Introduction to Western Music from the Middle Ages to Mozart.”

It was my best semester. In Government 1060—Prof. Mansfield’s course—students actually debated the material. In many classes, students merely debate how to conceal their ignorance of the reading. In English 54, my teaching fellow—a graduate student who assists the professor—

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infused the poetry we read with life. We listened to a recording of Richard Burton reciting Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, "Kubla Khan." We leafed through first editions of William Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* at Houghton Library, Harvard's literary treasure trove.

But my most satisfying experience was in Music 1a. I discovered that I love Johann Sebastian Bach and Joseph Haydn. They now populate my iPod. When the professor asked a string quartet to perform some of Haydn's work for the class, I realized what I had been missing. Harvard is big; it contains multiple universes, each centered on a different interest. There are lectures and concerts and screenings, but unless students look for these opportunities, they will miss them. They can spend their evenings solely at potential employers' information sessions.

Some do. To them, professors' office hours are opportunities to network—not to learn. Careerism is common among students. For example, Dale Carnegie Training recently held a well-attended event on campus entitled "Self Branding: The Art of Making Yourself Memorable." Still, many students enjoy their studies. One of my friends constantly e-mails me invitations to concerts to hear, in her words, "Berlioz, Debussy & Tchaikovsky!!" Another friend routinely encourages me to see the latest production of a Shakespearean play.

In short, Harvard College offers intellectual diversity, but not the kind that outsiders imagine. Most students share similar political beliefs, but our academic interests vary widely. A small but strong group relishes the liberal arts. We have the rest of our lives to work. We have only four years to focus on our souls. Nowadays, commentators condemn the College as one giant social ladder. This criticism is largely true, but a look beneath the rungs will reveal the liberal arts, still vibrant.

From Raging to Engaging at Vanderbilt

Mary Frances Boyle

It's Thursday night, and Vanderbilt students are quickly finishing up their work so they can get ready for the weekend officially to start. Yes, they have class tomorrow at 9:00 a.m., but that won't stop them from raging all night. First hit up a pre-game in the suite next door, move on to a frat for a little pong and punch, and finally head downtown to hop around the eighteen-and-up bars.

Pretty much everyone's hung-over in Friday morning classes, and here's to hoping they miraculously wake up and get to their first one on time (better set the alarm before going out...just to be safe). After classes it's time for "Fridays at Five." Raging starts pre-dinner, and then follows the same schedule as the night before, except dancing at parties on frat row may replace taking a cab downtown. Saturday night is similar, but an off-campus fraternity house may be thrown into the mix if any of the popular frats are on probation. There is a chance that some students will miss out on Saturday nights, especially when fall football tailgates begin at 8:00 a.m., or when afternoon-long crawfish boils heat up in the spring.

This is not how everyone at Vanderbilt lives, but this is the life that I came to know after arriving on campus. Most students around me lived for the temporary highs: the pre-games, the frat parties, the hookup after random hookup. They're smart and they sure work hard, but most of these students aren't searching for much from their college experience apart from a degree and loads of fun.

Because of this, apathy rules the campus. Students trudge around, headphones on, delicately tapping away on their iPhones. They are plugged into a different world, and when they happen to come back into this one, they talk more about what's on Perez Hilton and ESPN than what's happening on Capitol Hill.

Don't get me wrong, if you are looking for something in particular here, you will find it. It's easy to pinpoint students who share your beliefs, because passion stands out against the apathy. Vanderbilt has many service organizations, political clubs, and religious groups that hand out flyers and hang their banners all over campus.

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Fortunately, Vanderbilt's Catholic group yanked me out of the apathetic, relativistic rut I had sunk into during my first semester, and I began to care about what was going on in my life. Like many college students my age, I often went to bed at night sad and scared about how alone I felt, even though I was supposedly "having the time of my life." I was blessed enough to find a Truth to fill the void, and I hope many more in my generation can do the same.

Of course, I had to modify the way I lived. I cleansed my iTunes library of all explicit and racy music. I dress more modestly, drink more moderately, and focus on forming relationships with people over lunch dates rather than another round of shots. And what do you know—I sleep more, I'm getting better grades, and I have a smile on my face from sunup to sundown. It sounds like a lot less fun, but my circle of friends hasn't changed. I still go to fraternity parties and bars, and I still cuss every once in awhile. Nothing had to change except for my mentality, and now I go out amongst the ragers to be around them as an example of someone who doesn't have to act against her values in order to have a good time.

Of course, college is about having fun and enjoying our youthful freedom while it lasts, but I feel that we take away from each other's experiences if we don't care a thing for the world around us. College has led me down some crazy paths, but it all seems to be coming together now and moving in the right direction—one that I hope to follow for the rest of my life.

Catholic or Bust? The Spirit of Inclusion at Notre Dame

Mary K. Daly

Campus culture at Notre Dame inevitably is bound up with the university's Catholic affiliation. If the University of Notre Dame were to be stripped of her name, and thus stripped of her Catholic identity, would she retain her prestige? No. Notre Dame by another name would be nothing special. Her prestige rests not on being the *preeminent* Catholic university, but on being the preeminent *Catholic* university.

In recent and not-so-recent years, asserting claims like “academic freedom” and “the spirit of dialogue,” the university has allowed its Catholic character to take a back seat to the pursuit of academic prestige. Controversial campus performances of the *Vagina Monologues* in 2008 and the invitation to pro-choice President Barack Obama to deliver the 2009 commencement address are just two examples of news-grabbing events at Notre Dame that have caused considerable outcry both inside and outside the university community.

Ironically, although the goal may be membership in the elite circle of top-notch academic universities, I doubt that the schools with which we try to compete would take us seriously if we discard or compromise our Catholic identity. This seems to be happening already—*The Harvard Crimson* published a March 2009 op-ed in which the author said:

[F]or an institution sustained by the Catholic faith, which still, however unfashionably, purports to serve and honor the truth, such a mission ought not be discarded thoughtlessly. ...In inviting a president whose recent agenda prominently has contradicted [Church] tenets, Notre Dame intimates that the Catholic truth it purportedly upholds is malleable and appropriately sacrificed for the fleeting prestige that a presidential commencement address would confer.¹

Indeed, our nation is better served by having a distinctive Catholic voice in the education of its future leaders than by having just another prestigious

¹Christopher B. Lacaria, “Obama and the Fightin’ Irish: A Catholic School Ought Not Offer Its Pulpit to a Prominent Opponent of the Faith,” *Harvard Crimson*, April 1, 2009, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2009/4/1/obama-and-the-fightin-irish-this/>.

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university with a thin Catholic veneer. As current university president Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., said in his 2005 inaugural address:

Notre Dame is different. Combining religious faith and academic excellence is not widely emulated or even admired among the opinion-makers in higher education. Yet, in this age especially, we at Notre Dame must have the courage to be who we are. If we are afraid to be different from the world, how can we make a difference in the world?²

In light of such a statement, it seems that the university's leaders, at least in theory, would agree that the world needs an authentically Catholic Notre Dame. It is unfortunate that there is reason to doubt their sincerity in this.

A recent campus incident brings to light the tension between being Catholic and fully engaging, even embracing secularism. In January of this year, the daily independent student newspaper, *The Observer*, ran a comic strip offensive to homosexuals and, really, to all decent people.

The comic strip, titled "Mobile Party," was shockingly crude, "joking" that one could use a baseball bat to turn a "fruit" into a "vegetable." It should not have been printed; yet, such offenses are not uncommon for the *Observer*.

This time, however, backlash towards "Mobile Party" has been transformed into a springboard for a renewed effort to pressure the university into incorporating "sexual orientation" into its non-discrimination policy. Unbelievably enough, after apologizing for the cartoon, the *Observer* forcefully endorsed the campaign in an editorial demanding inclusion of the phrase.

Although other official statements of the university openly welcome members of all groups—including those defined by sexual orientation—and its discriminatory harassment policy protects sexual orientation, its legally binding non-discrimination policy does not include that phrase.

But the absence of the non-discrimination phrase and such corollary policies as the refusal of the administration to allow status to a gay-straight alliance club are not rejections of homosexual persons. Rather, these are examples of Notre Dame respecting her own Catholic identity—the same Catholic identity to which the supporters of such a clause are attempting to appeal.

As the 1997 document, "The Spirit of Inclusion at Notre Dame," explains, Catholic teaching embraces all people, including those of homosexual

²University of Notre Dame (<http://www.nd.edu/>), The Inauguration of Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., inaugural address, September 23, 2005, http://inauguration.nd.edu/ceremonies/inaugural_address.shtml.

orientation, but distinguishes the homosexual orientation from homosexual acts, which Catholic teaching condemns just as strongly as it condemns premarital sexual relations between heterosexual persons.³ The document further explains that today's understanding of "homosexuality" implicitly includes an approval of an actively homosexual lifestyle. Including this in the legally binding non-discrimination policy could have ramifications that would affect the university's ability to remain faithful to the Church and her teachings.

Meanwhile, what does the appearance of this uniquely hateful cartoon say about campus culture at Notre Dame? It says that we failed. We failed as a community to practice the Spirit of Inclusion. We failed it by allowing the *Observer* to think itself justified in printing the "Mobile Party" comic strip. We fail as we live lives that are morally reactive rather than morally proactive. We do this by the way in which we conduct our lives on this campus every day—rather than engaging in dialogue about important issues and seeking to better ourselves as rational moral agents, we gossip about what we did last weekend and discuss what we expect to go down this coming weekend. And then, when something goes wrong, we blame a higher authority for not preventing us from making mistakes in judgment and we further demand official concessions to compensate for our own lapses in Christian charity.

So far, the administration has been abundantly clear in making public the Church's teaching and the university's position on homosexuality.

Will it eventually succumb to social pressure and allow the non-discrimination clause to be amended, or will it reaffirm the Spirit of Inclusion, and thus turn the tables on those who demand the clause change rather than recognize that the problem lies within their own hearts?

³Office of Institutional Equity, University of Notre Dame (<http://www.nd.edu/~equity/>), "The Spirit of Inclusion at Notre Dame," <http://www.nd.edu/~equity/diversity/SpiritofInclusion.shtml>.

Generation A at Fordham

Amanda Fiscina

Generational branding has become an American pastime. Gertrude Stein branded World War I's young adults "the Lost Generation" for their characteristic disillusionment. Their World War II counterparts were named "the Greatest Generation" by television journalist Tom Brokaw for their high-caliber courage. Next came the "baby boomers," the largest generation in national history, whose political, economic, and lifestyle choices transformed America. Then "Generation X" arrived—the first group of young people to grow up surrounded by multiple media forms. The technologically savvy, dot-com-ing "millennials" followed and established a new, distinct kind of consumerism. This brings us to the youth of today. Meet "Generation A," the current group of aliterate, apathetic, and apolitical young Americans streaming through America's system of higher education.

This is a portrait drawn largely from my experience at private, pricy Fordham University, which is located in the Bronx and attended mostly by students from Northeastern suburbia, from families of moderate to high wealth. Fordham's prestige is currently growing, and while it lacks the selectivity of the Ivy League, it accepts only high-performing students with a mid GPA requirement of A- and average 1300–1400 SAT score.

Not all college students fit the Generation A designation. The fraction who do not are actually Generation A's antithesis—they are well-read and write frequently; they are passionate and engaged with political affairs. On a campus of five thousand students, however, there are actually only about twenty consistent campus publication writers and about one hundred College Democrats and Republicans combined.

But as for the A's, they are indeed *aliterate*. They can read, but don't; they can write (sort of), but choose not to. The entire world is in front of their faces—on their computer, television, and cell phone screens—yet most of these college students would rather do a digital Soduko puzzle than study world affairs. As former editor-in-chief of *The Ram*, Fordham's weekly newspaper, I have seen firsthand how little interest our reporters have in

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writing about the political climate, government systems, or Western values. They'd rather review trivial Manhattan hotspots.

Apathy also infects Generation A. For example, both former Republican Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and former presidential candidate Howard Dean recently gave lectures at Fordham. The College Republicans and College Democrats vigorously promoted these appearances, but Fordham students were embarrassingly unresponsive. Gingrich received a decent turnout simply because of a student affairs funding controversy (word got out that \$20,000 of student activity fee funds went to Gingrich instead of other campus organizations such as the Ski and Snowboard Club). Dean's visit, untouched by scandal, barely filled a mid-size venue.

Other appearances were even more poorly attended. When the Patriarch of Constantinople, the Greek Orthodox Church's equivalent to the pope, came to campus, few students knew who he was or, even more embarrassingly, why he was important. Other instances of apathy also abound: Fordham students consistently can't name and visually identify influential world leaders, and the free copies of the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* delivered daily to academic buildings and residence halls often remain untouched, only to be carted away by the facilities staff in the evening.

Being illiterate and apathetic also tends to lead to being apolitical, as a recent student government initiative at Fordham reveals. Fordham's official protest policy states that students who wish to stage a rally must contact the dean of students and "register" weeks prior to the demonstration. Additional time/place/manner rules regulate what political material can be distributed on campus. The student government is proposing that Fordham establish "Maroon Square," a campus free speech zone that would bypass this approval process and allow for spontaneous dissent and unfettered political activism. The student feedback on this initiative has been disheartening: students either have no idea what it is or think it is "pointless" and "unnecessary." Imagine considering free speech pointless and unnecessary—the Founding Fathers would cringe.

While "illiterate," "apathetic," and "apolitical" seem to define most Generation A members, their counterparts shine in contrast. Those students who write political newspaper columns, relentlessly plan political lectures, champion such issues as sustainability, and fight for Maroon Square are valuing and honoring democracy. And while these students tend to be intensely partisan, they are united in the fight to break the Generation A stereotype.

My generation is this way for a reason. I recently wrote my senior thesis on the young Americans of the 1960s, when college campuses were the site of visibly vibrant political participation and a hotbed for such issues as the Vietnam War, civil rights, and, eventually, the women's movement. While the methods and motives of these students were definitely questionable—often laced with petty vanity, near-sighted political views, and self-indulgent anger—their energy was unquestionable. And they effected change, both on campus and across the nation, carving the way for students today, and yet we rarely tread the roads they paved. Generation A recognizes the benefits of getting good grades and going to a good graduate school, of fiscal responsibility and purchasing power, and of having fun and getting inebriated. But we cannot as easily envision the benefits of a life enriched by political involvement. Overall, students today take for granted the freedoms preceding generations fought for and this spell of aliteracy, apathy, and apoliticism must be broken. It is time we are known as a new Generation A, as a group of articulate, aware activists who changed the world.

Debate Denied: Conservatives Stifled at Stanford

Gregory Hirshman

As an elite university home to some of the country's best and brightest young minds, Stanford is ideally positioned to foster intellectual and political discourse and encourage students to challenge one another's views on a wide range of issues. Unfortunately, its atmosphere is often hostile to the expression of conservative views, which stifles real debate on many subjects.

Although conservatives can speak on such issues as taxation without fear of intimidation, they will often refrain from other topics, especially those dealing with race or sexual orientation. Students who are not for affirmative action risk being labeled "racists." Students who oppose gay marriage may be called "bigots." Students who argue in favor of "don't ask, don't tell" may be branded "homophobes." Conservative students must weigh the benefits of expressing their views against the risks of being ostracized. As a result, only a handful dares to speak out.

One reason conservative students at Stanford feel intimidated is that its faculty and administration are so overwhelmingly left of center. According to "Voter Registration of Berkeley and Stanford Faculty," a Winter 2004–05 *Academic Questions* article by Daniel Klein and Andrew Western, the ratio of Democrats to Republicans among the Stanford faculty is 7.6 to 1.¹ Among the faculty in the humanities and social sciences, where political leanings of the professors are particularly relevant, this ratio is 14.4 to 1. Many faculty members bring their political and social views directly into the classroom. In the environment they create, conservatism is not regarded as an ideology that proposes an alternative view of the ideal society and of the proper means to achieve it, but as an intolerant, bigoted dogma whose purpose is primarily to frustrate the goals of the enlightened.

As a freshman at Stanford, I witnessed the way the leftward tilt of the professorship distorted discussion. In one of my classes, the two professors

¹Daniel Klein and Andrew Western "Voter Registration of Berkeley and Stanford Faculty," *Academic Questions* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2004–05): 60.

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staged a “debate” to present “opposing viewpoints” on the issue of whether gays should be allowed to marry. The first speaker presented the standard liberal defense of gay marriage, arguing that true equality requires each citizen to have the right to marry whomever he or she chooses, regardless of sexual orientation. In presenting the “alternative view,” the second speaker did not advance any conservative argument against gay marriage, but rather argued that activists should not advocate gay marriage because doing so would stimulate the conservative Republican base and impede broader social progress.

Having heard the “debate,” which purported to represent the range of acceptable views on this issue, a conservative student in the class would naturally hesitate to argue against legalizing gay marriage for religious reasons or because he believes that legalizing gay marriage would damage the traditional family. Most conservative students strongly suspected that their grades would suffer if they openly advocated such opinions. Unfortunately, my subsequent experience at Stanford has demonstrated that such classes are typical.

In a small way, I have worked to counteract this bias by founding and editing *The Cardinal Principle*, a newspaper that prints well-written and respectful articles from all political viewpoints in order to stimulate debate. But even outside the classroom it requires great courage to express conservative views on campus. As *The Cardinal Principle*’s editor, I have found that a number of conservative students want to publish their articles anonymously because they are fearful of repercussions if their views on controversial issues became widely known within the Stanford community. No liberal author has expressed similar concerns. If Stanford wishes to foster free and genuine debate, this fear of retribution must end. Stanford’s entire intellectual community would benefit.

Intolerant Tolerance at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Nash Keune

Franklin Street is Chapel Hill's Main Street. It is the commercial and social center of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and the default location for everything from nights out to bonfire-dotted national championship victory celebrations.

Scattered among the restaurants, clothing stores, and University of North Carolina (UNC) administration buildings on Franklin Street are four large, beautiful churches: Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist. As an incoming freshman more than a little frightened by descriptions of UNC's monolithic liberalism, seeing a skyline dominated by classical spires was a relief.

Since I was raised as a Southern Baptist, I naturally assumed that University Baptist Church (UBC) would be my home church for the next four years. But within my first few weeks of attendance, I learned that UBC had actually left the Southern Baptist Convention in 1991. Now affiliated with the New Baptist Covenant, UBC prides itself on being "strongly rooted in progressive Baptist life."

However, denominational or political issues are not the most aggravating aspect of UBC to undergraduates with traditional values. The most exasperating part of UBC is the pastor's seemingly compulsive paeans to the altar of Tolerance. For instance, the Sunday after two black members of the congregation were married at UBC, the pastor gave a sermon celebrating how stunningly open-minded UBC is compared to the masses of presumably bigoted reactionaries at other unenlightened churches. He was almost snobbishly proud of UBC's devotion to tolerance.

This tolerance is not a reflexive acceptance of anyone who wants to come into the church. Rather, it's a preening tolerance that designates certain groups to be tolerated, inevitably separating the church into the tolerating majority and the tolerated minority. Of course, this sort of tolerance also tacitly excludes those who do not share the same degree of pre-packaged open-mindedness, or those who simply don't have the disposition required to tolerate constant sermons about tolerance.

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A friend of mine is a case in point. He, too, came to UNC a lifelong Southern Baptist and went through the same process of disillusionment with UBC as I did. Basically, he was disappointed that the pastor sounded more like Jimmy Carter than Jimmy Dobson. But he was committed to trying to remain a church member, so he arranged a meeting with the pastor to discuss his theological problems with UBC's doctrines. After an hour-long discussion, though, it became apparent that he and the church had irreconcilable differences. The pastor then suggested that my friend, among other options, "try Hinduism."

My friend still isn't certain whether the pastor was joking or making a sincere suggestion. Either way, clearly there was no place for him at UBC. Unfortunately, UBC is not an exception when it comes to Franklin Street churches, the only ones within walking distance for UNC undergraduates. To some degree, each Franklin Street church exhibits this exclusive, often judgmental tolerance. Conservative students have no choice but to attend a church that preaches values different from their own or try to find a better alternative off campus.

But this liberal influence is hardly limited to the churches on Franklin Street. For example, the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, one of the leading nondenominational Protestant worship groups at UNC, has established a "social justice" committee. And it doesn't surprise many students to discover that the head of the UNC religion department, Dr. Bart Ehrman, is a famous agnostic evangelist or that the Secular Society is among the more visible organizations on campus. Sadly, the local churches provide little refuge for UNC students weary of the thoroughly secularized environment.

Conservatives and Libertarians Face Challenges at the University of Michigan

Adam Pascarella

The University of Michigan once provided the backdrop for a chapter in rock music history. The one and only John Lennon braved the chilly weather to visit Ann Arbor in December 1971, playing at his first concert since the Beatles disbanded. Greeting ecstatic students and Ann Arbor locals, Lennon and his wife Yoko Ono took the stage at Michigan's Crisler Arena to make a political point.

And all because of a simple drug deal gone wrong.

John Sinclair, leader of the Ann Arbor-based "White Panthers" movement that advocated for African American civil rights, was sentenced to ten years in prison in 1971 after selling two joints to an undercover officer. Outraged students protested for Sinclair's exoneration and their efforts culminated in Lennon's performance at Michigan. Ultimately, Sinclair was released one day after the concert, revealing how thoroughly Lennon and the sixties counterculture prevailed over the establishment.

Lennon's appearance was one of many instances in the 1960s and 1970s that caused left-liberalism to become fully internalized within the University of Michigan. As the university enters the twenty-first century, ideological continuities with the counterculture persist. For example, a *Michigan Review* study found that Michigan professors' donations to Democratic candidates and causes outnumbered donations to Republican candidates and causes by sixty-to-one since September 2008.¹ Only two of eight members on the current Michigan board of regents are Republicans. The university sets the ideological agenda and defines the starting point of conversation, making conservative and libertarian students feel that they comprise the opposition, as seen in Michigan's historical support of affirmative action practices.

The university's pursuit of diversity within its student body reignited the national affirmative action debate, culminating in two Supreme Court cases,

¹See Graham Kozak, "Democrats Receive Vast Majority of Professor Contributions," *Michigan Review*, April 3, 2010, <http://www.michiganreview.com/democrats-receive-vast-majority-of-professor-contributions-1.1293685>.

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Grutter v. Bollinger and *Gratz v. Bollinger*, the first of which allowed Michigan to use narrowly tailored racial preferences in its admissions process. However, the precedents developed from that case were dealt a harsh blow with the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative (MCRI), a 2006 referendum banning affirmative action practices in public institutions.² Responding to the shocking outcome, University of Michigan president Mary Sue Coleman implied that the entire campus community would unite to fight the affirmative action ban: “I will not stand by while the very heart and soul of this great university is threatened. We are Michigan and we are diversity,” she said one day after the election.³

University admissions officers have doubled their efforts to maintain campus diversity after the MCRI’s passage by specifically appealing to applicants from financially disadvantaged cities in Michigan. Ultimately, the one question never clarified in Michigan’s affirmative action debate has been the specific definition of diversity. The university clearly thinks race and economic class are the main components of a diverse environment, and while administrators may feel that diversity at Michigan results in the vibrant interaction of students of different races, there are some instances of student self-segregation, which can be seen in public places like university libraries and the university union. What is seemingly ignored is the importance of *intellectual* diversity in organized coursework. For example, courses like “The Practice of Community Organizing” and “Social Inequality” are common, while courses analyzing the philosophies of conservative thinkers such as Edmund Burke are rare.

Liberalism is fully institutionalized within the university, and most students are aware of that when applying to Michigan. The latest developments on campus are not encouraging: most notably, the administration plans to enact a smoking ban on all campus property to promote a “culture of health.” Classroom discussions in the Michigan political science and history departments tend to find consensus on subjects such as the need for cap-and-trade programs to counter global warming and government programs needed to protect blue-collar workers from economic globalization. And the university also plans to create gender-neutral housing in the near future to cater to transgender students, which could potentially allow male and female students to share dormitory rooms.

²For a detailed history of the MCRI see Carl Cohen, “Bad Arguments Defending Racial Preference,” *Academic Questions* 21, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 288–95.

³University of Michigan (<http://www.umich.edu>), Office of the President, Selected Speeches and Commentary, Mary Sue Coleman, “Diversity Matters at Michigan,” November 8, 2006, <http://www.umich.edu/pres/speech/speeches/061103div.php>.

Even with all of the obstacles that face ideological minorities, they do make their presence felt on campus. Student groups convinced Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul to visit campus in 2008, and conservatives were especially active during the 2006 MCRI debate. A conservative and libertarian bloc exists, but a sense of apathy has seemingly permeated, possibly resulting from the enthusiasm surrounding the 2008 election. The campus clearly supported Senator Barack Obama; liberal-left students executed a massive voter registration drive and invited speakers like actor Kal Penn to campaign for Democratic candidates. After Obama was elected to the presidency and Democrats received majorities in Congress, Republican students felt deflated, while Democratic students felt less need to campaign actively for a national progressive agenda. As a result, student activism subsided in 2009, allowing university administrators to be virtually unaccountable in advancing issues like the smoking ban.

What Michigan needs is a reinvigorated effort by traditionalists to keep the administration honest. The University of Michigan will continue to champion progressive causes, but traditionalists have built a niche on campus with the emergence of such organizations as the Student Objectivists, the College Republicans, and the Young Americans for Freedom. While some cleavages between libertarians and conservatives may exist over specific issues (like the smoking ban), these differences do not necessarily impede future activism; on the contrary, policy differences among traditionalist university groups could strengthen their collective voice on campus. *The Michigan Review* has been attempting to reinvigorate the dialogue by offering contrarian viewpoints on its editorial page; other means of challenging the status quo in Ann Arbor include inviting traditionalist speakers to campus. For example, in September 2008, the Heritage Foundation, a right-of-center think tank, held a symposium on campus that brought together state and national thinkers to discuss American principles and their relevance in the twenty-first century.

Using all of these means of voicing their political beliefs, conservative and libertarian students have a great opportunity to promulgate their views on campus. Only time will tell if their collective efforts will put pressure on the university's agenda.

Pursuing Truth and Virtue: The Great Tradition at Hillsdale College

Julie Robison

Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged.

—Article 3 of the *Northwest Ordinance*

Every Friday of this past semester has been called “Founding Friday” by a few of the majors in the Department of American Studies at Hillsdale College, a small liberal arts college nestled in rural southern Michigan. We would meet periodically after our “Founding of the American Republic” class at a local restaurant to drink beer, talk about our lives, discuss ideas, and challenge each other in our common pursuit of truth. Our studies have led to friendship, and we learn as much about ourselves as we do each other. We are fortunate to go to a college that fosters diversity without exploiting it, allowing for fruitful debate in and out of the classroom.

The first thing I learned at Hillsdale is that the pursuit of truth is the highest calling of a student, and here truth is taught as an absolute, not as a revolving door of ideas. I do not find this intellectually crippling; on the contrary, through the reading of the primary documents that are the crux of the college’s curriculum, and accompanied by lively dialogue in the classroom, I feel myself prepared to broach the universal.

Starting in freshman year with Genesis, the Code of Hammurabi, and Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, we can see ideas that are common among disparate cultures. By emphasizing the Great Tradition, Hillsdale teaches students to understand the organic nature of knowledge. Furthermore, unlike many universities, we study the sciences and the humanities together and therefore see how they interconnect.

I find that diagramming the syntax of Latin grammar, for instance, prepares me for more attention to detail, as does balancing chemical equations. I find it difficult to separate the laws of nature from physics or

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philosophy any more than one could discuss the state of nature without mentioning Locke, or government without Montesquieu. Humanity animates history similar to the way enzymes catalyze substrates into products. Art is not only the survey of beauty, but of civilizations, mathematics, and religions.

Studying the same core forges camaraderie among the student body, and campus life cements the bonds. Greek life thrives with 40 percent campus participation, and the fraternities and sororities sponsor most of the school's philanthropy programs, alongside student-run GOAL programs. Athletic events at home are well-attended and the athletes are encouraged through the "Adopt-a-Charger" program. Academic honoraries and clubs host speakers and organize activities that allow the faculty and students to interact frequently. Although Hillsdale is a non-denominational school, religious services are held regularly on campus, with Christian worship services held monthly, Mass twice a week, and noontime prayer and rosary daily. It is not unusual for people to have a serious conversion experience during their college career, or at least a deepening of their faith.

Since the student body is roughly 1300, it is easy to do all-school events, such as dances and holiday festivals. The campus boasts many musically-inclined students (myself not included), and there is a monthly opportunity for student bands and individual talents to perform for their peers at an event called Coffee House, in addition to the annual Battle of the Bands.

A downside to the quaint campus is its distance from major cities, which possess a greater number of cultural and civic attractions. This is actively combated by campus groups that organize excursions to Ann Arbor for the University of Michigan's libraries and concert scene, Detroit and Chicago for the art museums and missions (to volunteer), and Washington, D.C., for political rallies and conferences.

My classmates, teachers, and sorority sisters, in addition to the many people I have gotten to know outside the college, encourage intellectual pursuit and spiritual growth. My academic adviser and his wife, for example, have become respected mentors. I coached their daughter in soccer for two years and continue to babysit their five children. They have become a second family on campus, sharing with me more than the occasional meal. Within the student body, I have met women and men alike with whom to share Christian fellowship, as well as snarky comments, moral guidance, late-night walks, friendly support, killer dance moves, and plenty of laughs.

Hillsdale students are not different from most of our peers at other schools: we travel abroad, train athletically and musically, intern with companies, and work a conglomerate of jobs to help pay tuition. After graduation, Hillsdalians traditionally pursue doctorates, law degrees, or medical school, dedicate a few years to missionary or overseas work, or hold positions in politics, journalism, or business. A respectable number of students join the military, even though Hillsdale does not have an ROTC program due to the college's refusal to accept federal funding. Hillsdale students seek a vocation, not just a job, which is why a high percentage of graduates go into teaching as well, filling a void in the country for good teachers. Hillsdale affirms familial and religious values, so students do not leave college disenchanting with the world but rather more determined to do their share perfectly.

A substantial number of Hillsdale students marry after college—if not within months after graduation, then certainly in the five-year grace period afterwards. Students do date on campus, but many do not date lightly. Marriage may not be the ultimate end of the relationship, but it is a consideration taken—to the chagrin of some, and delight of others. Dorms are strictly same-gender, complete with house mothers and visitation hours, not to discourage relationships, but to help them develop in a healthy way. Sex is not a hushed-up affair; many members of the student body willingly admit they are saving themselves until marriage.

Education is not wholly about a career or a grade point average. My college experience has become a Canterbury Tale, my pilgrim soul wandering with my peers and teachers through thoughts and theories for four years, questioning and contemplating, determining and debating, listening and learning.

It is here that I have been taught to understand what it means to be human, and I know my greatest undertaking in life shall be to continue the pursuit of truth and virtue, even if it is over a pint of beer.